

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### **Attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain): A comparative multiple-case study of pre-compulsory early years settings**

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**Attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent  
(England) and Murcia (Spain): A comparative multiple-case  
study of pre-compulsory early years settings**

**by**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of PhD**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the premise that children may be more accepted in social situations in Spain than in England. This was framed within a review of international reports and mass media sources that indicated children in England may be viewed less positively than in Spain.

The central question asked if there were differences in attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain). To address this, a comparative multiple-case study of pre-compulsory early years settings was employed. Social settings in the wider environments were also investigated. A qualitative, interpretive approach to the research generated data through interviews and observations in these locations.

The first part of the fieldwork involved visiting six early settings where 48 practitioners in three coastal, town/city and out-of-town settings in both Murcia and Kent were interviewed. This entailed observing practitioners' interactions with children and their daily practices. The second part involved spending time in intergenerational spaces within the two wider societies; hotels, restaurants and shopping centres. In these, 18 interviews were conducted and adult-child interactions were observed. Before adopting more conventional methods for coding categories and identifying emerging themes, *NVIVO*, a qualitative data classifying program, was used to sort and categorise these data.

In conclusion, the main differences identified in the settings were practitioners' attitudes to affective behaviours, emphases on safety factors and valued social behaviours. Regarding attitudes to children in the wider societies, children appeared less likely to be excluded from shared public spaces or viewed as nuisances in Spain. In contrast, although Kent provided more child-focused

facilities than its counterpart, this sometimes resulted in children being segregated from adults. This thesis potentially contributes to the field of early childhood studies by highlighting how the interplay of cultural differences and adults' attitudes impact on young children's lives.

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# **Chapter 1: Setting the scene for the research**

## **1.0 Introduction**

My interest in this area of research arose from a personal hunch that Spanish society may display elements that could be associated with a more child-friendly/child-centred culture as opposed to England. In my view, one of the defining features of a child-friendly/child-centred culture was that children may be more accepted in social situations. My initial perception was given some support from a range of sources.

These sources included national and international reports that had compared England (and the United Kingdom (UK)) with other countries' practices on child-focused issues, UK based mass media sources (see Chapter 2), a selection of popular literature (King, 2006; Druckerman, 2012) and some academic-related sources (Screech, 2009; McDowall Clark, 2010). A common theme emerging from some of these sources was that England was conceptualised as a society where the presence of children in public spaces, and their participation in public life could be improved.

In this opening chapter, after presenting my substantive aim, I begin by introducing some of the reports that helped to form the rationale for my research. Next, I identify gaps in the current research literature and indicate the potential contribution that my own research study will make. Following on, I discuss my methodological approach and methods used to investigate this topic, and provide a résumé of my research findings. I conclude this chapter by defining a number of key terms that I draw upon throughout this thesis, and provide a summary of the thesis chapters. The publications and presentations that have arisen out of this research study are then listed.

### **The substantive aim**

The substantive aim of this research was to identify if there were any cultural differences that underpinned adults' attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain. I was interested in determining factors that influenced how young children were perceived by adults. Likewise, I was curious to find out if, and how these factors impacted on the provision that is created for young children; both in provided pre-compulsory early years settings and in intergenerational spaces in the wider societies. To contextualise my own research study, I now present a discussion of some pertinent national and international reports that included the United Kingdom and Spain. In this chapter, and throughout the thesis, The United Kingdom, Great Britain, England, and Spain (and its 17 autonomous regions) are referred to as they appear in the written sources.

### **1.1 National and international reports: a focus on the United Kingdom and Spain**

Large-scale studies that have focused upon, or included children as the unit of analysis to compare the United Kingdom (UK) with other countries' practices have often relied upon statistical data to present the results. In a Spanish context, Ferran Casas has been a lead researcher in a wealth of reports on children's wellbeing (Casas *et al.*, 2007; Casas *et al.*, 2008). Based in the UK, Professor Jonathan Bradshaw (Bradshaw, 2007; The University of York, 2011) has been a key author of several high-profile international comparative reports. He frequently draws upon quantitative data to report on social policy and child well-being.

Whilst useful in identifying trends and patterns, these predominantly quantitative studies may lack the fine-grained explanations and attention to detail that small-scale qualitative research studies aim to produce. Pertinent to this observation, Bradshaw acknowledges that [large-scale] international comparisons are not good at exploring inequalities or for answering why questions. Furthermore, the research focus of many large-scale studies has been predominantly more relevant to the lives of older children rather than the lives of younger children.

Studies undertaken by the *National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI)* (2000, 2003) and *Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)* (2008a) have presented the UK as being a society with a somewhat negative perception of younger children. A report by the *NFPI* (2000) compared Britain with other European countries. Although looking at family and work policies, and focusing on the child within the family, the report indicated that attitudes to children's presence in public spaces could be improved. In a similar vein, the *DCSF* (2008a) study headed one of the sections in its report "It's our culture, we don't like children" (p.67) whilst highlighting the apparently favourable attitudes to children in Mediterranean countries as opposed to those in the UK.

Other reports (Margo *et al.*, (2006a, 2006b) for the *Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)*; Bradshaw, Hoelscher & Richardson (2006a); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2007); Bradshaw (2009); Bradshaw *et al.*, (2009); Bradshaw and Richardson (2009); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2009); the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) (2009)) have painted a variable, and at times, a pessimistic picture of some aspects of children's well-being in the UK in comparison to other countries, and their relative public policies (Cusworth and Bradshaw, 2009).

The report by Margo *et al.*, (2006a) for the *Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)* (2006) and the report by Bradshaw *et al.*, (2006a) at the *Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU)* compared children's well-being in the European Union. The *IPPR* report included concerns that the socialising capacity of many parents and communities had waned. As a result of this decline, British children tended to spend more time in the company of peers and less time with adults and parents. The report also indicated that adults in Britain appeared less likely to intervene in youth violence and behaviour; than adults in Spain. Equally, adults in Britain were more likely to blame young people for antisocial behaviour than adults in Spain.

In research undertaken by Bradshaw *et al.*, (2006a) the UK fared badly in the overall well-being of its children, being rated 21 out of 25 countries on eight clusters (children's material situation, housing, health, subjective well-being, education, children's relationships, civic participation, risk and safety). Although top of the league for educational attainment and housing quality, the UK scored poorly for the quality of children's relationships with their parents and peers and for subjective well-being. In contrast, Spain was rated at 6 out of 25 countries on the league table of well-being, but fared less well on educational attainment and housing quality. Spain also scored higher than the UK on the quality of children's relationships with their parents and peers and children's subjective well-being.

The much quoted 2007 UNICEF report (also see Bradshaw, Hoelscher & Richardson, 2006b) attempted to measure and compare children's well-being under six different dimensions (material well-being, health and safety, educational well-being, family and peer relationships, behaviour and risks, subjective well-being) in 21 OECD countries. This report emphasised the importance of knowing '...whether children feel loved, cherished, special and supported, within the

family and community...'(p. 39). The UK's average ranking position out of all dimensions placed it bottom of the table, and Spain was ranked number five. By its own admission, the report was heavily dependent on the currently available data and did not collect any new data.

In 2011, UNICEF UK, referring back to UNICEF's Report Card 7, commissioned another study (Ipsos Mori/Nairn, 2011; UNICEF, 2011) to explore children's relationship with materialism, inequality and wellbeing. Based on a sample of only 24 families, and 250 children across the UK, Spain and Sweden, the ensuing report concluded that whilst being a parent in the UK could be a strain, it was more natural in Spain and Sweden. This outcome was linked to UK parents struggling to spend time with their children, using material objects to compensate for this, and putting more emphasis on belonging to a "consumer generation". Again, the UK's attitude towards child-rearing and children was presented in a less positive light than that of Spanish and Swedish societies.

On the other hand, in a league table of 25 OECD countries, released by *UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre* (2008) listing ten benchmark standards for early childhood care and education services, England had met five whereas Spain had only met three. In turn, England was placed at 13 in the league table and Spain was lower down in nineteenth place. Both countries had subsidized and accredited early education services for 80% of four year olds; 80% of the child care staff was trained and 50% of staff in accredited early education services was tertiary educated and held a relevant qualification. However, Spain did not meet the benchmark standard for the availability of child care services for children under three, and neither country had met the benchmarks for parental leave or the minimum staff-to-children ratio of 1:15 in pre-school education.

England also emerged more positively than Spain in a *World Health Organization Report (WHO)* (2008) that looked at health-related indicators. Children in England reported lower use of cannabis, said that they had more friends and liked school more than their Spanish counterparts. Consistent with these findings, in a report for the *OECD*, (2009) (Whitehouse and Wilcox, 2009) focusing on 30 OECD countries, the United Kingdom performed well in relation to the category 'Quality of school life'. Although no countries did well across all six child well-being dimensions (material well-being, housing and environment, educational well-being, health and safety, risk behaviours, quality of school life) the United Kingdom was comparatively more successful than Spain in relation to 'material well-being'. Nevertheless, Spain did better in terms of 'health and safety' (including factors such as infant mortality, underweight births, breastfeeding) and 'risk behaviours' such as smoking, drinking and teen births.

Whilst statistical data underpin many of these reports, and recognising the need to read the outcomes critically, they have highlighted some of the possible differences between the two countries focused upon in this thesis. They have also provided a framework based on the key factors that the organisations responsible for the reports appear to consider good for *all* children and how these may best be provided, primarily in terms of public policies. However, these factors may not fully take into account individuals' ideas about childhood, or intra-country and inter-country specificities. Additionally, underpinning the dimensions of quality are social constructions about childhood and children which may negate the variability in the cultural differences that impact on childhoods and children.

Nevertheless, as highlighted by James and James (2008) reports such as *UNICEF's Report Card 7 on Child Well-Being* have drawn attention to apparent

differences in the physical and emotional well-being of children, and have provided a context in which to question the political, cultural and social factors underpinning different childhoods in Europe. Therefore, it is not surprising that several UK studies were commissioned to follow up some of the more negative points arising from the *UNICEF Report*. For example, *UNICEF (UUK)* commissioned a study (Cusworth and Bradshaw, 2009) to examine some of the dimensions that were concerned with relationships with family and friends, subjective well-being and risk behaviour. The aim was to question why the UK was doing badly in these domains and to identify solutions. This study focused upon countries (Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden) that had done comparatively well on the subjective well-being, peer and family relationships and behaviour and risks domains. Questionnaires were given to national informants (academics with special interests in children and children's services and UNICEF national committees) in the six selected countries. Spain was chosen because it was seen as a Southern European case doing well on all the dimensions. The questionnaire included questions about policies covering: family relationships; peer relationships; children in society; subjective well-being; behaviour and risks (Cusworth and Bradshaw, 2009, p. 25). One question was aimed at eliciting information about the existence of formal policies to promote positive social perceptions of children and their role in society.

As there has been no shortage of reports (Beunderman, Hannon and Bradwell, 2007) that highlight concerns about England's highly publicised negative perception of children, this question was especially pertinent. Informants from the six countries did not mention the existence of any specific policies or initiatives, with the assumed perception [of the authors] that such policies, to promote



positive perceptions of children, were not needed. In the conclusion to the report Cusworth and Bradshaw, (2009) note that in addition to public policies, cultural influences may impact on the dimensions of children's well-being. Referring to the four Anglophone welfare states (the UK, the US, Canada and New Zealand) that did not do well on child well-being in the 2007 UNICEF Report the authors proposed that:

...these societies with their emphases on personal liberty and individualism do not perform well in relation to children...As a result children tend to be 'seen and not heard', considered a disruption to adult life, even a threat. This is reflected in the welcome we give children in, for example, hotels and restaurants, on public transport, even in cities, towns and neighbourhoods (p.21).

This conclusion is resonant with some of the problems associated with contemporary child-rearing and the UK's emphasis on individualism raised in *The Children's Society* report (Layard and Dunn, 2009).

As can be gleaned from the content of these reports, a confusing picture emerges. Clearly both the societies of the UK and Spain have areas where children's wellbeing could be improved by providing more material resources, and changing public policies. However, as noted by Cusworth and Bradshaw (2009) cultural influences may also impact on the dimensions of children's well-being. Therefore, when differences are attributed to cultural factors, solutions to enhancing children's lives may become more complex. In turn, large-scale quantitative studies may identify potential cultural differences in child-rearing but fail to explain these anomalies.

Furthermore, when the findings of reports are disseminated through mass media sources, such as newspapers and the internet they have portrayed a bleak picture of British society. Perhaps such negative reporting contributed to the following response from the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2008) Committee to the third and fourth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This response expressed a concern with ‘...the general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes, towards children’ (p.6). One of the Committee’s recommendations, in protecting children against resulting discrimination, was to:

[take] urgent measures to address the intolerance and inappropriate characterization of children, especially adolescents, within the society, including the media (p.6).

Public responses in newspaper columns, websites and related forums to the reporting of child-focused publications have been revealing in terms of both individual and collective opinions (see Chapter 2). Reactions from the general public have indicated not only a conflict between personal and societal values but also an ambiguity towards children and their childhoods. Although recognising the limitations of viewing these responses as being representative of societies as a whole, they have presented me with an array of factors that are revealing of the attitudes of individuals and collective groups towards the centrality, the place and the social location of children. Consequently, the topical interest of how to rear children presented a timely opportunity to undertake this research study. Within this context, the place of children in society, and the appropriate ways in which

they should be raised; both in early years settings and in the home environment are frequently debated by adults.

## **1.2 Adults' attitudes**

Adults are the ones who predominantly decide the fate of young children within societies, whose actions driven by their attitudes, dictate the provision that is put in place for our children. They also decide what is good for children both conceptually and physically. As Beunderman *et al.*, (2007) suggest:

Too often public discourses about children focus exclusively on them, rather than acknowledging the central role adult attitudes play (p.52).

Therefore, I argue it is only right that adults' attitudes are put under the spotlight to enable the identification, examination and critical discussion of these attitudes. Authors, such as Jones (2009), who have written about adults' attitudes to children, choose not to commit to any one definition of this term. Notwithstanding this, when I refer to *attitudes* in this thesis I expand upon the Oxford Dictionary definition as 'a settled opinion or way of thinking' and 'behaviour reflecting this' and turn to social psychologists' definitions of the concept. Social psychologists (Howarth, 2007; Taylor, 2007) also see attitudes in a similar way, in that people respond to various attitudinal objects (for example – 'place of children') depending on their opinion/attitude about the object/s. Mainstream psychologists argue that there are three components to attitudes, often referred to as the 'A, B, C model' (Rosenberg and Howland, 1960 in Bohner, 2001). These components comprise the cognitive (beliefs about the attitude object); the affective (emotions elicited by the attitude object); and the behavioural (action directed toward the attitude object). To draw upon the conceptual definition of Eagly and Chaiken

(1993), 'Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor' (p.1). Thus, the evaluative response to the entity (attitude object) is expressed cognitively, affectively and/or behaviourally.

### **1.3 The research gap**

Several gaps existed in the literature. As aforementioned, most of the large-scale studies discussed previously that made comparisons between the lives of children in the UK and Spain were quantitative, and relied on statistical data. The majority of these studies focused on older children rather than children below the age of five years old. With regard to smaller-scale comparative studies, there are some examples of research that have focused upon Spanish and English early years settings (Kutnick *et al.*, 2007; Ortega, Romera and Monks, 2009; Monks *et al.*, 2011). However, these studies predominantly explored children's peer relations and recorded and presented their data quantitatively.

Consequently, since research undertaken by Penn (1997) there have been few small-scale qualitative research studies that have compared aspects of young children's lives in the UK and Spain; either in early years settings or in the broader child-rearing environments. Therefore, there was a lacuna of small-scale, early childhood qualitative studies that have been located in Spain and England. Notwithstanding this gap, there were no academic studies that had compared adults' attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Spain and England from a qualitative perspective. Furthermore, as suggested by James, Jenks and Prout (1998), and Holloway and Valentine (2000a) approaches to the study of childhood have tended to neglect cross-linkages between micro studies and macro studies.

The former studies are helpful in understanding children's worlds, and the latter studies are informative about the 'relative social position of different children in different countries' (Holloway and Valentine, 2000a, p.767). In turn, linking these two approaches is likely to produce more contextualised studies of childhood. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature for studies that make cross-linkages between conceptualisations of the local and particular, and global and universal. Additionally, comparative studies are crucial to highlight social and cultural diversities within Europe. These studies are especially important in the light of agreements such as the Lisbon Strategy (2000) (European Council (EC), 2000), the Barcelona Summit of 2002 (EC, 2002), and the more recent EU 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010a; University of East London (UEL) and Universiteit Gent, 2011) that move countries towards an integrated European early childhood and education agenda. As Rayna (2004) proposes comparative analysis is a useful tool on three levels; decentring from one's own point of view, helping practitioners to become aware of tensions within their beliefs and practices, and 'presenting researchers and policy makers with examples that can lead to a questioning of taken-for-granted positions' (p. 46).

This thesis contributes to the comparative academic literature by undertaking a small-scale, qualitative study that focuses on young children in Spain and England. The research will look at both the local comprising pre-compulsory early years settings and the global in terms of broader societal attitudes to children. I acknowledge that the findings from this study are specific to the two areas investigated in Spain and England; Murcia and Kent. Nevertheless, I suggest that the findings may provide a starting point to become better informed about broader cultural differences. I also envisage that the attention to detail in my small-scale

qualitative study will contribute to a better understanding of how different cultures may have contrasting conceptions of children, and how these may define their place and status in society. In summary, as the research focuses upon pre-compulsory early years settings and the wider societal context, this study will add to a broad base of literature. This base comprises the childhood studies literature (James and Prout, 1997; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Jenks, 1996; 2005; Qvortrup, Corsaro, and Honig, 2009; Corsaro, 2011) and cross-cultural comparative studies (Tobin *et al.*, 1989, 2009). As my research focuses on young children the main contribution will be to the early childhood phase of children's lives. The topical nature of this research means it will also be of interest to a broader public audience.

## **1.4 How the research was conducted**

### **Methodology and theoretical framework**

The central research question asked if there were differences in attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain). To address this question, a comparative multiple-case study of pre-compulsory early years settings was employed. Social settings in the wider environments were also investigated. A qualitative, interpretive approach to the research generated data through interviews and observations in these locations. An interpretive approach enabled me to explore participants' experiences and their views of these experiences (Gray, 2009).

I needed a framework that allowed me to focus both upon the policies and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings, and to enable an exploration of the beliefs and values that informed and guided practitioners' individual and collective patterns of child-rearing strategies. In doing so, I envisaged that the

information collected would enable me to become better informed on the factors that defined adults' attitudes in relation to the nature of and place of young children in the wider societies of Spain and England.

Thus, a key aim for the research was to enable a comparison of the impact of any social and cultural differences visible in early years practice in the two countries, and then to explore to what extent these may be reflected in individual and collective societal attitudes towards young children.

Although recognising the difficulty in defining culture and its derivatives such as cultural, to inform my references to this concept, I present my understanding of the concept of culture in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, it was not my intention to pigeonhole Spain and England into dichotomous categories as this may result in '...complexities and subtle differences [being] overlooked' (Killen and Wainryb, 2000, p.7). Additionally, I recognise there are likely to be layers of determination of class, gender and race within the cultural frameworks of Spain and England, and similarities between the two countries. Nonetheless, I also expected there to be inherent levels of commonality (Harwood, Schölmerich and Schulze, 2000) within the two countries that may be ascribed to shared cultural values and beliefs.

Two documentary reviews were undertaken. These reviews demonstrated differences between the societies at both local and national level. The results of these reviews are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. They were useful for situating the fieldwork undertaken in the six pre-compulsory settings, and in the 18 public spaces comprising hotels, restaurants and shopping centres in the two societies' social and cultural contexts.

The academic literature that underpinned my theoretical framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. For the first part of the study I drew upon

Harkness and Super's developmental niche (2006) framework. The findings from both parts of the research were considered in the context of childhood studies (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Jenks, 2005), generational theories (Mayall and Zeiher, 2003; Corsten, 2003; Alanen, 2009), and also by referring to some examples from the field of children's geographies (Holloway and Valentine, 2000a, 2000b; McKendrick, 2000; Baylina Ferré, Ortiz Guitart, Prats Ferret, 2006; Ortiz Guitart 2007). In the conclusion to the research, I situate my own theory in the midst of this academic literature, to explain some of the differences that emerged from the analysis of my data

### **The fieldwork**

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken in two parts.

Ethical consent was obtained from Roehampton University Ethics Board. The research was conducted in accordance with the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines. I also drew upon the guidelines of the British Sociological Association and the National Children's Bureau (see Chapter 5).

The first part of the research investigated whether or not there were differences in adult-child interactions and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings in Murcia, Spain and Kent, England. This was a comparative multiple-case study which made use of observations and interviews. The case studies comprised six pre-compulsory early years settings (three in Murcia and three in Kent). I spent 13 days over a period of three- to four weeks in each of the pre-compulsory early years settings. During these visits, data were collected using interviews, observations and by drawing upon documentary evidence such as examples of the settings' curricula and planning. Interviews were undertaken with 48 practitioners



who worked at the six pre-compulsory early years settings. A total of 36 hours of observations were recorded at the settings comprising 15 hours of video-recorded data and 21 hours of written observations. Both structural (physical environments; play materials and equipment; adult-child ratio); and process (child and adult interactions and relationships) dimensions of the settings were considered (Rosenthal, 2003; UEL and Universiteit Gent, 2011).

I adopted a standpoint that early years settings may be reflective of the two societies' attitudes towards children (Bereday, 1964; Broadfoot, 1999; Alexander, 1999), and be revealing about children's respective social location. Thus, taking the findings from these early years settings as a starting point, the second part of this study investigated whether or not the differences, identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings, were reflective of and related to broader social attitudes towards children and childhood. My fieldwork was extended to intergenerational spaces in the wider societies of Kent and Murcia. Interviews were conducted with 18 identified parents in the two countries. Their responses were merged with the 48 practitioners' knowledge and understanding about wider societal attitudes towards children. This part of the study was also supported by interviews with 18 key participants (in Murcia and Kent), comprising restaurateurs, hoteliers and representatives from shopping centres who negotiate the place of young children in public spaces. Employing interviews enabled me to become better informed of participants' experiences of societal attitudes to young children. Additionally, 36 hours of observations (two hours in each fieldwork setting) were recorded in these 18 public spaces.

The following three research questions underpinned my study:

- Are there any differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory settings in Murcia, Spain and in Kent, England?
- Do identified patterns of interactions in these early years settings, and practitioners' beliefs and values about children and child-rearing reflect the social location of young children within the cultures investigated?
- Are any differences identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood?

### **The findings**

The findings from the first part of my research revealed some differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices. These interactions, relationships and practices were couched within the settings' physical environments (buildings, space, outdoors, pedagogical materials). Other overarching structures included the experience and training of practitioners, curricula, legislation and regulations, and child-staff ratios (UEL and Universiteit Gent, 2011). Three particular themes were identified in the settings that represented differences; practitioners' attitudes to risk, safety and resilience; affective physical interactions and behaviour management: the promotion of social norms.

As I report in Chapter 8, which serves as my conclusion, some of the differences identified in the Murcian and Kentish pre-compulsory settings, were reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood. Regarding attitudes to children in the wider societies, children appeared less likely to be excluded from shared public spaces or viewed as encumbrances in Spain. In contrast, although Kent provided more explicitly child-focused facilities than its

counterpart, this practice sometimes resulted in children being segregated from adult activities. In summary, the two areas; Murcia and Kent prioritised different issues and these impacted on the social location of young children.

### **1.5 Potential for further research**

The findings arising from my study provide a broad base on which to undertake further research studies. For example, my chapter on mass media sources provides a starting point on which to employ discourse analysis (Lee and Petersen, 2011; Robson, 2011) by focusing on the language inherent in child-related articles. Several additional areas of my research would also benefit from further analysis. For example, this research could be extended to other locations and different age groups of children. As this study focused upon adults' attitudes to children and childhood, working with children to obtain their views on how they felt they were accepted into social situations would be valuable. Other avenues of investigation would be to situate the research in a Spanish early years setting based in England and in a British early years setting situated in Spain to compare the practices. With regard to the wider society, there is potential to investigate intergenerational relations in different locations in these areas or in other societies and countries. In particular, it would be interesting to study interactions in global companies that have establishments in different countries but have adapted these to local customs and cultures. A company such as *IKEA* would be likely to provide a useful base for comparison as it has shopping facilities, an eating establishment and a children's crèche under one roof.

## 1.6 Terms used in the thesis

Notwithstanding the array of labels, terms and definitions that abound in early education and care, for the purpose of this thesis the following definitions will be used:

***Childhood, children and child:*** In referring to the terms ‘childhood’, ‘children’ and ‘child’ I draw upon James and James’ (2004) definition, which helps to demonstrate the interplay between these conceptions:

...‘childhood’ is the *structural* site that is occupied by ‘children’, as a *collectivity*. And it is within this collective and institutional space of ‘childhood’, as a member of the category ‘children’, that any *individual* ‘child’ comes to exercise his or her unique agency (p. 14).

Additionally, unless specified otherwise and notwithstanding my focus upon young children up to the age of five years old (as defined by The Childcare Act, 2006, p. 11 (HMSO, 2006) and the EYFS (DCSF, 2008b), p.54), I draw upon Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) which defines ‘children’ as persons up to the age of 18.

***Child-friendly:*** In the UK, the terms ‘child-friendly’ and ‘family-friendly’ have become familiar indicators for people who want to visit or to locate a place that welcomes children. At a superficial level this may be a hotel, a restaurant, a holiday resort or a tourist attraction. Making London a child-friendly place was the focal point of the previous Mayor of London’s (Ken Livingstone) ‘Children and Young People’s Strategy’ (GLA, 2004). In a ‘child-friendly’ version of the

document, the '*Jargon Buster*' section defined the term 'child-friendly', as 'good for children, and understandable to them' (p.16). The recently designed UNICEF (2011a; 2011b; 2011c) website cites a 'Child-friendly City (CFC)' as, '...a local system of governance, committed to fulfilling children's rights'. This statement is followed with 12 children's rights which range from having access to basic needs such as drinking water, health, care and education to being an equal citizen of their city. Consequently, UNICEF's definition of 'child-friendly', moves into the realm of children's rights, in conjunction with the UNCRC (United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child) presenting a more complex definition of the term. Nevertheless, a cursory glance at the newly developed tool for measuring the child-friendliness of cities highlights the difficulty in using the same set of criteria to compare worldwide cities (The Child Friendly Cities Research Initiative, The Innocenti Research Centre of UNICEF and Childwatch International, 2010; 2011). Whilst recognising the difficulty of defining the term child-friendly it has been impossible not to refer to this during the thesis; especially as it is a term that is frequently used in UK mass media sources. Therefore, unless I state otherwise, child-friendly will be defined as accepting children in social situations and spaces.

***Child-centred:*** The term 'child-centred', sometimes used as a synonym of 'child-friendly', appears to be self-explanatory in that children are at the centre of the environment. In the Good Childhood Inquiry (Pople 2009) a truly child-centred society is defined by the contributing professionals as '...one that enjoys, respects and listens to children' and described by Hendrick (in Pople, 2009) as showing "tolerance of 'childish' behaviour" and "sensitivity to the particularities of

childhood” (p.19). The concept of child-centred has also been linked to early years education and care. In this context, a child-centred approach is underpinned by developmental theories and children learning through self-initiated play, in an environment that is organised to encourage discovery and exploration. Within this, the traditional role of the child-centred educator is that of facilitator rather than as instructor.

***Curriculum:*** This term is used to describe a way of structuring learning experiences, an organised programme of activities, opportunities and interactions (Stephen, 2006).

***Escuela infantil:*** This term describes a pre-compulsory early years setting in Spain that provides educación infantil for children aged from nought to six years. ***Educación infantil*** is organised into two cycles (0-3 years and 3-6 years). This phase of children’s education is voluntary, and has its own distinct educational style from the subsequent phase of education (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (MEC), 2004).

***Mass media sources:*** In this thesis, this term is used to refer to newspaper and magazine articles, popular books, advertisements, and internet sources including websites, web pages, blogs and forums.

***Pre-compulsory early years setting:*** Acknowledging that the structure of early years settings vary between Spain and England, reference made to this term in the thesis refers to the six early years settings that I visited for the purpose of this

research. Attendance at all of the settings was voluntary prior to beginning statutory education. Whilst recognising that the age range of children varied at these settings, all six settings made provision for two- and three-year-old children. Therefore, this age group was my main focus.

***Practitioner:*** Throughout the thesis ‘Practitioner’ is the term I have used to refer to any adult who worked directly with children in the pre-compulsory settings (based upon the definition in the EYFS (DCSF, 2008b)).

***Space and place:*** For the purpose of discussion I differentiate between these terms as follows - **Space:** type of setting for interaction; **Place:** specific site of meaning.

## **1.7 Thesis Outline**

**Chapter 2** comprises a review of mass media based sources that focused upon children. These sources included books, guides, newspapers and websites. The resulting analysis gives some indication of how children were represented in the UK’s and Spain’s mass media sources. Although these sources reflected similar social problems and child-rearing dilemmas in the two societies, children in Spain appeared to be conceptualised less negatively than children in the UK. In particular, some of the UK sources emphasised adults’ intolerance towards children, which was subsequently compared to other European societies’ more favourable attitudes to children.

In **Chapter 3** I compiled a detailed overview of the two countries’ policies and provision made for young children and their families. This chapter includes

information on the legal frameworks, social and educational policies, and the curricular frameworks of Spain and the UK that impact on young children's induction into these societies. I also provide data on birth rates, and discuss female employment and family policies in the two countries. Finally, I look at the topic of children's health and safety, and some of the measures put in place to safeguard and protect children. The provision of this overview enabled the contextualisation of some of the key themes and issues arising from the media based written sources.

**Chapter 4** is a review of the literature that provides the background for my own research study. In this chapter I look at how understandings of childhood may impinge on children's social location. I then discuss some historically constructed models of childhood before focusing on aspects of contemporary and socially constructed views of childhood. In considering intergenerational relationships, I look at the topics of children's social behaviour, the protection of children and affective behaviours between children and adults. Before reviewing a selection of small-scale comparative studies, I discuss the constructs of individualism and collectivism, and present my working definition of the concept of culture. To conclude this chapter, I introduce the developmental niche; the theoretical framework used in the first part of my study at the pre-compulsory early years settings.

**Chapter 5** serves the function of setting out the methodological framework, and methods that I adopted to undertake this study. I begin this chapter by revisiting my research questions and explain why adopting a qualitative, interpretive



approach helped me to explore these. After doing so, I discuss my strategies of inquiry, an ethnographic approach, and reflect on my role as the researcher. I then look at how comparative studies have evolved through several stages, and highlight the potential knowledge and understanding to be gained by undertaking cross-cultural studies. In justifying my use of case studies, I introduce the two areas in Spain and England where my fieldwork was located; Murcia and Kent. I then look at the research methods I employed which comprised documentary reviews, interviews and observations. As I investigated two countries with different languages I explain the decisions made about translation issues. I then discuss the ethical considerations that guided my research study's process and progress. Finally, I report on how I collected, analysed and interpreted the data.

**In Chapter 6 and 7** I present the findings and discussion of my fieldwork research. The focus of **Chapter 6** is the six pre-compulsory early years settings that I visited in Kent and Murcia. In this chapter, I consider my findings in relation to the first two research questions. These findings are examined within the context of the “developmental niche”. I begin by discussing structural factors and move on to look at interactions, relationships and practices in the six settings. Before discussing my findings, I focus upon three identified themes: risk, safety and resilience, affective physical interactions and behaviour management: the promotion of social norms.

My discussion in **Chapter 7** moves on to the wider societies of the two areas investigated. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part explores some of the issues arising from interviews with 66 participants (48 practitioners and 18

parents). Their responses enabled me to become better informed about children's social location in intergenerational spaces in Kent and Murcia. Part 1 concludes with a discussion of these findings. The second part of the chapter focuses on research undertaken in the public spaces comprising hotels, restaurants and shopping centres. I report on the results of the 18 interviews with hoteliers, restaurateurs and representatives from the shopping centres. In turn, I consider examples from the observations that were undertaken at these 18 fieldwork sites.

**Chapter 8** concludes this thesis by revisiting the original aims and discussing the findings of the research. This review is followed by an evaluation of the methods used, the contribution made to the field of study and suggestions on the way forward. Key areas that would benefit from further research are also presented in this chapter.

### **1.8 Presentations and publications arising out of this research study**

The following papers have been presented at conferences as progressive contributions of this research work. An article has also been published in a professional journal for early years practitioners.

Gomez, C. (2009a) *Child-friendly: exploring the concept through the lens of child-rearing practices in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain*. Paper presented at Changing Childhood Conference, University of Chichester, Chichester, July 2009.

Gomez, C. (2009b) *A comparison of early years practitioners' conceptualisations of young children and the impact of these on practice and provision in pre-compulsory settings in Murcia, Spain and Kent, England*. Paper presented at the British Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester, 2 - 5 September 2009 [online], <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/187891> (Accessed 31/01/10)

Gomez, C. (2010) 'Early education in Murcia', *Early Years Educator (EYE)*, Vol.11,

Issue 12, 01 April 2010, pp. 36-38.

[Forthcoming presentation]

Gomez, C. (2012) *Child-friendly: a contradiction in terms?* Paper accepted for presentation at Child in the City Conference, Zagreb, Croatia 26-28 September 2012.

## **Chapter 2: Perceptions of cultural difference - an investigation of mass media sources**

### **2.0 Introduction**

An integral part of this study has been an exploratory analysis of relevant mass media sources that give some indication of the social location of and broader attitudes to young children in Spain and the UK (United Kingdom) (with a focus upon England). In this chapter I present the results of the examination of this material. Four questions underpinned this endeavour:

- In what ways are young children represented in mass media sources?
- What do these reviewed sources reveal about the nature of contemporary attitudes towards children?
- Are there any similarities or differences in the way that children are represented in the Spanish and UK sources?
- Do UK sources make any reference/comparison to Spanish society and do Spanish sources make any reference to UK society (about their attitudes and/or treatment of young children)?

The key aim of this process, in identifying the main themes of these child-focused articles, was to build up a broad picture of how children were conceptualised in Spain and England. In the discussion that follows I highlight some of the main concerns as reported by adults; relevant to children's lives. Examples are included to illustrate some of these perceptions of cultural difference in attitudes towards children in the two societies. These examples provide a background for my own research and establish a rationale for the fieldwork reported upon in Chapters 6 and 7. I also anticipate that these attitudes and perceptions are likely to be visible

in, and impact upon young children's experiences both in formal early years settings, and also in their early introduction and induction into wider society.

## **2.1 The mass media sources investigated**

After only a short time spent searching bookshops, public libraries and the Internet it became apparent that there was a plethora of potential sources to be investigated. These included a broad range of books and guides (i.e. Urrea, 2009; Frost, 2011), magazines (i.e. *Ser padres*; *Practical Parenting*) and websites (i.e. [www.cyberpadres.com](http://www.cyberpadres.com); [www.mumsnet.com](http://www.mumsnet.com)). Many sources were targeted at the child-rearing choices of parents and carers of children; featuring, discussing and giving advice on similar topics in both Spain and the UK.

A wealth of articles in newspapers with children and parents/carers as their main focus, emerge into the public domain on a daily basis. The Internet presents the public with an opportunity to respond personally to these articles. This virtual source provides parents, carers and other interested parties with a numerous amount of forums to engage with, and links to many organisations that have children and related topics as their main focus.

The analysed material comprised books, guides, newspapers and websites. Online UK national newspapers (*The Mail*; *The Telegraph*; *The Times*; *The Express*; *The Sun*; *The Guardian*; *The Independent*) and online Spanish national newspapers (*ABC*; *El Mundo*; *El País*; *La Verdad*; *La Vanguardia*; *20 minutos*; *TelePrensa.es*) were searched bi-weekly from October 2006 to June 2012. Their respective archives and websites such as [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) were also examined. Reactions to child-related articles were followed up through on-line blogs, forums, and local or regional newspapers. In summary, this task entailed the reading and

analysing of over 2000 articles. Faced with such an abundance of information, it has been necessary to select particular examples representative of the main themes identified that supported my argument. Whilst acknowledging the richness of data in these contemporary textual materials, in Chapter 5 (see p.185) I discuss some of the implications that needed to be considered when drawing upon these types of sources.

Although my fieldwork focused on the cases of Murcia, Spain and Kent, England (see Chapters 6 and 7) it has been impossible to confine the analysis of documents to these two areas. Consequently, throughout this chapter I have sporadically referred to the United Kingdom, Great Britain, England and Spain (and its 17 autonomous regions) as they appeared in the written sources. Whilst recognising there may be differences between and within these countries and regions, taking this approach had the advantage of enabling the broader context of the two selected areas to also be explored. I now move on to give an overview of how children were represented in the UK's and Spain's mass media sources.

## **2.2 The mass media's representation of children in the UK and Spain**

Responses to current news stories on the existing expectations of children, and attitudes towards young children not only in England and Spain, but also in other European countries have been revealing. Madge (2006) draws attention to the guidelines and principles drawn up by *The International Federation of Journalists* for reporting on issues involving children. These stated that journalists should “avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children” (p.145). This practice is resonant with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2008) Committee's

recommendation, referred to in the preceding introductory chapter (p.9), for the UK to address the intolerance and inappropriate characterization of children, in mass media sources.

The former Children's Commissioner for England (2005-2010), Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green has frequently condemned the British press for their role in contributing to the demonisation of children (Aynsley-Green, 2010); suggesting that 70% of press cuttings about them are negative (Frean, 2005). In particular, he has drawn attention to the media's persistent use of labels such as 'yobs', 'feral youths' and 'hoodies' used to describe children and young people (Defries, 2009). Similar examples of these labels and negative terms were located in my review of UK written mass media sources; especially in news stories (*BBC News*, 2008a; Moore, 2008; *The Economist*, 2009; Horowitz, 2009, Garner, 2009; Shakespeare, 2011). However, labels and terms need to be viewed within their social context. For example, they are often assigned to a particular group of children i.e. those viewed as coming from problematic backgrounds or who live in deprived areas.

Based upon my review, Spanish mass media sources, especially newspapers, produced fewer negative stories about children than the UK does. This could be related to Tremlett's (2007) observation that, 'Spain has no muck-raking tabloid press [and] [t]here is no equivalent to Britain's Sun [newspaper]...' (p.116). In keeping with this, Hooper (2006) discusses the absence of a popular press in Spain, unlike Britain's 'highly developed popular newspaper market' (p.350). However, the recent emergence of 'giveaway' newspapers in Spain such as *20 Minutos*, which appear to fill a gap in the popular newspaper market (Hooper, 2006), also seemed to be devoid of stories that denigrated children.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that some of the public's comments on Spanish forums responding to child-focused news stories, such as one reporting on two [wholesale] shops in Murcia posting a sign that prohibited the entrance of customers with children '*Prohibida la entrada con niños*', alongside one saying 'No dogs (*Perros no*)' (Santos, 2007), were not quite as restrained. In turn, over 80% of the 200 respondents who commented on this story agreed that the shopkeeper was justified in displaying the notice. Thus, news stories that attempt to emphasise children's plight may not necessarily provide a reliable account of their readers' views. Hence, I have taken this factor into consideration by following up comments on public forums. However, as I demonstrate in the next section, news stories and headlines in Spain and the UK, featuring children and issues relevant to them, were revealing of a variety of concerns common to both societies.

### **2.3 Mutual concerns: recurring issues involving children**

Comparing news stories and headlines in Spain with those in the UK, on the topic of children and childhood, highlighted some of the issues that journalists assumed to be of interest to their readers. In the sources surveyed, between 2006 and 2012, these topics were indicative of adult anxieties about children; especially moral panics (Cohen, 1987) and toxic childhoods (Palmer, 2006), and the action adults should take in response to these dilemmas (Brooks, 2006; Palmer, 2006; Gill, 2007a; Louv, 2008).

Many of these topics were also reflective of similar social problems. Recurring themes focused on children's physical wellbeing; including concerns about childhood obesity, sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets (Baena, 2010; Smith,



2010). There was also emphasis on children's declining social and life skills (*The Sun*, 2008; Velasco, 2010). The negative impact of poverty upon children's lives often made newspaper headlines (Morgan, 2010; EFE: Madrid, 2010a), as did the harmful effects of contemporary society. For example, anxieties were raised about the amount of time children were spending on computers and watching television. Articles frequently drew upon the findings of reports (Vidal and Mota, 2008; Layard and Dunn, 2009), included reference to safety issues such as dangers of the Internet, and the risks and threats associated with modern childhood (real and perceived); including paedophilia (Garcia, 2008a, 2008b; *BBC News*, 2009a, 2009b). An emphasis on 'stranger danger' anxiety, particularly predominant in the UK sources, appeared to impact on the protection of or, in some instances, the 'over-protection' of children which was then equated with a loss of their freedom (*BBC News*, 2009c). However, children's declining autonomy was also blamed upon a shortage of spaces where they could play and over-scheduled childhoods (Coughlan, 2007; Campelo, 2010a). Notwithstanding this, there was concern that children were growing-up prematurely and missing out on their childhoods (*London Lite*, 2008; Campelo, 2010b).

Salient issues related to parenting and child-rearing comprised the amount of time parents spend with their children, and the contribution parents, already do and could potentially, make to their children's education (Barroso, 2006; Kirkup, 2008a). The declining standard of children's behaviour was a common topic as were related behaviour management issues and techniques (including the use of corporal punishment) (*El País*, 2006; Carvel, 2008). Both countries frequently reported on the extent of domestic violence against children and also cited several instances of child abuse that had occurred in early years settings (R.C.: Girona,

2010; Morris, 2010). Accounts of childhood mortality included examples of tragic accidents and homicides (Trinidad, 2010; Hutt, 2010).

Education-focused factors included the problems of bullying at school and the increased incidences of violence against teachers (Martin, 2006; *Mail-Online*, 2010). The curriculum content in educational establishments for young children was deemed to be a point of public interest, as did the age when children should commence their formal education and the debate about optimal class sizes (*El País*, 2008; Paton, 2008). A recurring issue was the provision of day care and out-of-school care for children ranging from its monetary cost, its under-provision or absence, its over-provision and the beneficial and the detrimental effects associated with the institutionalisation of care upon children (Gentleman, 2009; Agencias, 2009). It was noticeable that the Spanish-based sources tended to highlight the lack of provision for under-threes; apparent in articles discussing ‘*guarderías clandestinas*’ (unregulated childcare settings) (Álvarez and Sahuquillo, 2008). Conversely, UK sources seemed to be further preoccupied with the harmful effects upon children as a result of the increasingly long hours that some of them were spending in daycare and out-of-school care (Paton, 2006).

Adult-child relations were the focus of much mass media discussion and incorporated intergenerational relationships, the impact of children on adults’ lifestyles, the consequences of parental divorce upon children’s lives, and changing family structures focusing upon issues such as single parenthood and family size (Maza 2006; Cassidy, 2008). In debating their low birth rate, the Spanish sources tended to link this to a lack of support for parents and families (Pérez de Pablos, 2010) rather than in relation to how children affected the social

or emotional aspects of adults' lives; issues that were prevalent in the UK sources (Alleyne, 2010).

One key topic, especially visible in the British news sources, was the social place of children. This topic regularly debated where children should, and should not be admitted, and how they were expected to behave in these intergenerational spaces (Ronson, 2009; Knowles, 2009). As highlighted later on in this chapter, the prohibition of children from some public spaces was a recurring topic of discussion, especially when it was linked to reasons other than for their own protection. However, Spanish sources (Morán, 2007a) seemed more likely to write about creating places that were *friendly* or *amistosas* for all the generations; ranging from children to retired people rather than focusing on child-friendly or child-specific places.

One of the few articles about children's exclusion from the wider society, in a Galician version of *20 Minutos* (Juan, 2007) reported on the banning of children's toys such as bats and balls in some public areas of Vigo – noting that 'To be a child and to play quietly in Vigo (in shared public areas) is getting more and more difficult'. However, as with the Murcian shop article discussed earlier (see p.31) this tended to take the standpoint of defending children's presence rather than negating it. It was also significant that Spanish newspapers regularly reported on events linked to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (*Teleprensa.es*, 2009; *Europa Press*: Barcelona, 2009). Likewise, the related '*Día del Niño*' (Day of the Child) (celebrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> November to commemorate the day when the governments represented at the United Nations General Assembly, including the UK and Spain, agreed to adopt the UNCRC into international law) received much coverage. In contrast, events promoting the

rights of children and/or their positive behaviours, such as these seemed to receive less attention in the British press.

Nevertheless, regardless of differences highlighted between the popular press of Spain and the UK, and their approach to reporting news about children; many similar themes have been identified. As I have also shown in this section child-focused issues are given a high profile in both Spanish and UK mass media sources. The attention assigned to these issues demonstrates that parenting and child-rearing dilemmas and adults' concerns about children's needs, rights and demeanours are considered to be of public interest in both societies. However, as I highlight in the following section UK society was seldom portrayed as a child-loving nation in the mass media sources reviewed.

## **2.4 British attitudes to children**

A key theme emerging in written sources; from a British perspective, was that they did not view themselves (or in some cases; other Britons) as being accepting of children in social situations and spaces.

Evidently recognising this issue, the Prime Minister, David Cameron declared that he wanted the UK to become Europe's most family friendly society. In turn, the *Family and Parenting Institute* (FPI), (2011a) (formerly the NFPI) launched a 'Family Friendly' scheme in Summer 2011 (FPI, 2011b). This was aimed at helping UK businesses and services to be more welcoming to families; claiming that 'Only six per cent of us think the UK is a very family-friendly society' (FPI, 2011c). The scheme includes participating organizations displaying 'We are Family Friendly' signs on their doors. This initiative was linked to a related Family Friendly Populus Poll (FPI, 2011d) that indicated 87 per cent of parents,

with children under five, surveyed said that this would make them possibly or definitely more willing to step inside.

England's first Children's Commissioner for England Sir Professor Al Aynsley-Green (from 2005 to 2010) has used an 'English: child unfriendly; other countries: child-friendly' analogy to vent his frustration at English negative attitudes towards children on several occasions in mass media sources (Philpot, 2004; Ward, 2005; Cassidy, 2010) and in a speech to the *Royal Society of Arts (RSA)* (Aynsley-Green, 2010). Just before stepping down from his post, his level of frustration becomes clear in an interview for *The Independent* newspaper (Cassidy, 2010). In this, he lamented that, 'One of the greatest challenges we have had is public attitudes to children. This country [England] is one of the most child unfriendly countries in the world'.

The MP David Willetts (2007), referring to the much publicised UNICEF (2007) Report in his Keynote Address at the *RSA Risk and Childhood Report Launch* in October 2007, recalled his visit to Spain to see why it was in the top five alongside '*the goody, goody Scandinavians*' [my emphasis]. Drawing upon his conversations with English expats he concluded that there was much more public welcome of children in Spain, 'whereas in England it was all much more wary' (p.7).

Hilton Dawson, chair of the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners, London, in an interview for *The Guardian* newspaper (Ward, 2007) observed that, 'We don't like children in this country' equating this to being afraid of them. He also drew upon the southern European analogy to highlight his point stating, 'Compare the way we view families in this country with the way they view them in southern Europe...' (p. 5).

It was striking that many British people did not appear to be ashamed to express their negative attitude to children and did little to challenge the assigned label of not liking children. In fact, some commentators seemed proud to profess this dislike for children as exemplified in the following headlines spanning 17 years:

Bad behaviour: Are British children a public nuisance?: If we are not a child-friendly nation, could it be because our kids are brats?  
(Lacey, 1993)

Why all children should be confined to Center Parcs  
(Jones, 2010)

Liz Jones (2010), in the article that accompanied this second headline, albeit tongue-in-cheek, went on to ask ‘Why do families with young children go on holiday? If a child is under five, *it* [my emphasis] has no idea where it is, so why bother?’ She then moved on to suggest that, ‘Families spoil the world’s beauty spots...’ and, ‘ruin restaurants with that blight on modern humanity...’ concluding that [children] ‘should be confined to places like *Center Parcs*, with lots of coloured slides and disinfectant’.

A book, entitled ‘*I hate other people’s kids*’ by Adrianne Frost (2006) shelved under the category ‘Humour’, is described as a ‘...handbook to help you navigate a world filled with tiny terrors – and their parents’. The introduction sets the scene for the book:

I hate [other people’s kids] with a vengeance. I don’t like to see them, smell them, or hear them...Kids are a chaotic mess of drools and squeaks, and I hereby give you licence to hate them too (p.2).

This author continues on a similar theme for 106 pages before reassuring the reader that having read the book they will feel better knowing they have the liberty to hate other people's children. Although the author lives in New York, the book was published and distributed in Great Britain, indicating that the publisher saw this country as a potential market for this kind of humour.

Similarly, Catchside (2008) suggested that the UK public, given the chance to be negative about children, seizes the opportunity. She quotes Geoffrey Pearson, author of the book '*Hooligan*', who proposed that '...society is in the habit of succumbing to moral panics about the youth of the day, while looking back to a "golden age" of respect and discipline'. However, as I have emphasised in this section, besides 'harking back to the past', other countries' practices were also used as a comparative lens to highlight the UK's pessimistic societal attitudes to children. This is an issue I revisit in more detail later on.

## **2.5 The Spaniards' reporting of UK-based stories**

Several Spanish written sources reported on stories that had appeared in UK-based newspapers. One Spanish newspaper, *La Vanguardia* (2010) picked up on a story from *The Sun* newspaper (Hamilton, 2010) that featured a UK based high street store removing its padded bikinis for children from its shelves. This resulted in some Spanish comments that were critical of '*British*' child-rearing styles, in relation to how their children were dressed i.e. as mini-adults. Drawing upon a study undertaken by Barnardo's (2008) which featured in the UK press, one Spanish source (*El Economista*, 2008) carried the headline 'Fifty per cent of British people believe that children act like animals'.

On the theme of youth crime in the UK, Oppenheimer (2008), writing for *El País* opened his article on the use of the UK's controversial use of the mosquito device (20 Minutos, 2008a; Hill, 2010) as a deterrent with the following statement:

For a young Spaniard, a mosquito is an annoying insect that often attacks in the hot summer nights. For a young Briton, a mosquito is a device that emits a buzzing sound that can be only heard by those younger than 25 years old that is used to deter '*gamberros*' (troublemakers; hooligans).

*El País* followed up this story with an accompanying on-line survey (in Spanish) posing the question 'Do you think that the 'Mosquito' alarm should be banned?' Out of 1706 respondents to the survey, 57% thought it was discriminatory and 43% thought it was a good method of protection. Likewise, the outcome to this survey is indicative that mass media sources may not necessarily provide an accurate representation of their readers' opinions, or that Spanish children's behaviour is more exemplary than British children's.

## **2.6 Societal attitudes to children in a comparative context**

As aforementioned the British (or sometimes English) child-unfriendliness was often compared to other societies such as Spain, Italy and France who were viewed as being child-friendly. In her England-based study, Madge (2006) asked 507 adults 'How child-friendly are we compared to other countries?' Responses were mixed, just over a quarter said England was a lot or a little more child-friendly, a further quarter said it was the same and the remainder said it was a little or a lot less friendly (pp.115 - 116).



Madge's findings were consistent with an earlier study conducted by the *National Family and Parenting Institute* (NFPI) (2000) indicating that Britain may be less 'child-friendly' than some of its European counterparts. On closer analysis, the defining features that makes a society 'child-friendly' in these two studies is an emphasis on descriptive traits, inherent in people's affective behaviour towards children such as 'cherishing them' and 'showing tolerance', rather than making provision for specific child-centred facilities.

Some of the findings from a qualitative study, referred to in the previous chapter, undertaken by the Department for Children and Families (DCSF) (2008a) were also compatible with this image. The study explored 'Childhood well-being' and included a section entitled "It's our culture, we don't like children" (p.67). These findings were also reported upon by mass media sources, commanding headlines such as 'Parents bemoan state of childhood' (*BBC News*, 2008b). The study reflected the views of parent groups that associated the problem of raising children in the United Kingdom to struggling in public with them and to the fact that the UK was not a family-oriented culture. Families that had holidayed abroad, especially in Mediterranean countries, reiterated a common theme as demonstrated in the following examples:

When you go on holiday to Italy or Spain, you can take your children with you, everything is set up for families, people expect you to have your kids with you. In this country it's miserable. You get some kind of beer garden next to the bins with a grotty table overgrown with weeds, I hate it (p.67).

...It makes me so angry when I come back here from being abroad, it's so easy over there, children are welcome, they're made a fuss of, and here we treat them as if they're some kind of...illness (p.67).

The parent groups went on to cite a variety of symbols that indicated a lack of tolerance of children [in the UK] including:

- Notices forbidding children at certain hours, and from playing any kind of games on the street;
- Children not allowed in licensed restaurants and bars (unless outdoors);
- Only so many children in a shop at any one time;
- Tutting and disapproving noises made around children and families;
- The 'children should be seen and not heard' rule being applied (p.67).

Equally, sources such as *The Economist* (2009) have focused upon familial themes emphasising that Britain's children may lack the participation in 'the shared family meals of Mediterranean countries' or as Dejevsky (2009), writing for *The Independent*, and comparing Britain and Continental Europe, suggested, that British children spend less leisure time as a family group.

Anne Karpf (2007) writing for *Guardian on-line* finds the term *child-friendly*, and how this translates into practice; problematic. She begins her article by referring to a restaurant in Bologna, Italy. However, the main difference she noticed between this restaurant and a similar one in Britain is that in Bologna everyone (including the children) was eating the same food. In effect, the words *child-friendly* were nowhere to be seen. Karpf goes on to express how much she hates the term *child-friendly* – most of all, because in her opinion, it, 'often means precisely the opposite'. Not only does she equate *child-friendly* food as being unhealthy, she also blames efforts to create *child-friendly* places for making children adult-unfriendly. She writes:

In western societies...we've cut children off from the blood supply of adult culture and immured them in a ghetto of children...and complain when they don't know how to get on with all age groups or respect old people. You can tell a lot about a country if it needs a website to reveal which are the child-friendly museums, tourist attractions and parks.

She summarises her article by suggesting that creating *child-friendly* places is not necessarily a good idea and that:

Instead of cordoning off kids into child-friendly menus and restaurants, we need to induct kids into adult culture, and make it a place for all the generations to meet. Perhaps then youngsters may become more adult-friendly.

Consequently, creating a child-friendly or family-friendly environment may not be so straightforward and may result in an opposite effect, as expressed by Karpf (2007) in that it contributes to making children adult-unfriendly. In turn, children's behaviour is frequently highlighted as a barrier to their integration in UK shared environments. For example, a survey of 2,000 parents, commissioned by *Mother and Baby* magazine with *Mothercare*, reported on by Womack (2008) in *Telegraph on-line*, concluded that six out of ten of them thought Britain as a holiday destination was not 'family-friendly' and that half of them branded Britain 'anti-child'. Seventy four per cent of parents thought British hotels saw babies and young children as a nuisance, and more than half thought that other guests found children annoying. Thus, it is not surprising that twenty per cent of British parents placed Spain in second place after the United States (with 24%) as the most child-friendly country, whilst Britain was at the bottom of the list with only six per cent.

In accordance with this survey, Spain is typically presented in a positive light, in travel literature, for those parents/carers from the UK considering holidaying in, or moving to Spain - if they enjoy spending time with their children. This extract from *The Sunday Times* (2005), '*Spain Special: Viva España: plan the perfect family break this summer*' recommends Spain if you have children:

...there is one difference that seems utterly unbridgeable [between the British and the Spanish]: our respective attitudes to children. The British tolerate children, the Spanish love them.

The article moves on to highlight how difficult it would be to turn up with preschool children at 10.30 pm at a 'posh restaurant in Britain' in contrast to Spain but also points out that, '...contrary to the belief of paranoid British parents, Spanish children don't all behave like angels but nobody cares'.

The Spaniards 'love of children' is highlighted in numerous travel books and publications targeted at potential expatriates (King, 2006). Dare and Thorniley's (2007) *Frommer's Mediterranean Spain with your Family* paints an idealistic picture of the Spaniards' welcoming attitude to children describing their love for youngsters as a national obsession. They note that children are adored but are not wrapped in cotton wool and suggest that 'hardly anywhere is out of bounds' for them. Whilst stressing that restaurateurs will look at you blankly if you ask whether it is okay to bring children to the table, they do caution that specific facilities for children such as highchairs, menus and crayons at dinner tables may be lacking (with the exception of restaurants run by expats).

According to travel trends for 2006 (National Statistics, 2008), 14 million British people visited Spain but only 1.9 million Spaniards visited the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is possible that the British view of the Spaniards being

more child-friendly may be based on their experiences as tourists rather than as residents of Spain. However, the following examples feature comments from individuals who have lived in the two countries.

The year before being awarded the 2007 'UNICEF Child Friendly City' title, Barcelona was also voted 'Family-friendly' city in a 2006 UK survey consisting of 800 parents (takethefamily.com, 2006). A British person who had lived in Barcelona for 16 years '*canuto*' (2006), reacting to this award, did not think Barcelona was child-friendly at all (*Guardian Travel Blog*, Brown, 2006). In his opinion, 'Barcelona offers nothing specifically for children...there are still far too many metro stations without lifts for pushchairs...Most parks and playgrounds are small plots of gravel littered with rubbish and dog excrement'. Despite this, he described Barcelona as a city that welcomes children but noted that:

The image of Barcelona as a child-friendly city is based on an illusion created by the Mediterranean approach to children...you will never be turned away from any bar or restaurant...The rationale is why should children be excluded from these places...They are future adults who need loving and acceptance...unlike in the UK, Barcelona offers nothing specifically for children, but...allows adults to take them everywhere so they can get on with enjoying themselves and not feeling bad about having the kids with them.

However, '*canuto*' explained that having two children aged four and two, he has moved back to the UK because, '...with few child-centred amenities and without the support of family...there really was no other option'. In this example, '*canuto*' presents an argument that child-friendly societies may comprise two strands; specific facilities for children and places that welcome children. However, it seems the first strand may be in response to the lack of support networks; namely

the extended family and the second strand of welcoming children everywhere exists because everyone wants to be together.

Susan Pedalino (2006a) writing for the '*Eye on Spain*' website, aimed at Britons living in, and considering living in Spain, presents a similar picture in that the Spaniards '...are a child-loving nation [but] their facilities are not always child-friendly [and] still not at the level that we take for granted in the UK'. To illustrate the pros and cons of this, she reflects upon her return visit to the UK (from Spain) with four-year-old twins. In this subsequent article Pedalino (2006b) highlights '...how intolerant the British...are of children', but emphasises the advantages of the UK's specific child-friendliness that incorporates children's menus, crayons and highchairs in contrast to Spain's absence of these. Thus, the same themes seem to re-emerge in these sources; people in Spain may exhibit more positive attitudes to children but the consequence of this is that there are fewer child-specific facilities. In turn, the Spaniards' label of a 'child-loving nation' (Pedalino, 2006a, 2006b) often appears to be ascribed to a generalised almost assumed innate quality.

A British born journalist turned author who is based in Spain has also expressed his view of the Spanish and British attitudes to children. Giles Tremlett (2007) writes about a return visit to Britain when his children were refused entry to a pub, faced with a sign that read 'No dogs, no children' and suggests that:

Whereas small children turn British parents into social lepers, they elevate Spanish parents into privileged human beings...In restaurants, for example, rather than being shown the door or taken off to a 'families only' quarantine zone, you will find the waiters' attention and efforts doubling... (p.236).

Consequently, it is not surprising that Bedding (2006), in offering advice to *Telegraph* readers visiting Sevilla, Spain dedicated a section in his article, entitled ‘Coping with children’. In this, he discussed how, once in Spain, they should, ‘Learn to adore other people’s children...[and] Instead of doing that British thing – tut-tutting, throwing icy stares, coughing loudly – gaze at them with misty-eyed affection’. Perhaps anecdotal, but useful in reflecting upon taken for granted ideas on children’s behaviour in different contexts and societies, Flower (2009) shares his thoughts and questions on his view of children from the perspective of an English expatriate living in Spain. In doing so, he draws upon his experience of attending funerals there, in the *Telegraph.co.uk*:

In one of the pews a baby howled lustily, and across the aisle, three giggly young girls whispered to each other. In a side aisle a young boy played some mysterious skipping game, whose rules were known only to himself. For a few moments, my staid English sensibilities found these things offensive for surely adults should curb this disrespectful behaviour? But knowing what I do of the Spanish attitudes to children, I wondered why I was offended by these children acting naturally? What was that baby crying, and these children being children, but an affirmation of the continuity of life, and the joy of living? Why should the normal pleasures of life be stilled?

As I have illustrated in this section, the UK has been regularly compared unfavourably with other countries to emphasise its approach towards children in shared public spaces. Conversely, the more positive and somewhat idealistic characteristics associated with southern European countries, including Spain have been highlighted. These include affective qualities and an increased threshold of tolerance towards children’s behaviour. Above all, from a UK perspective these

societies are less likely to exclude children from intergenerational groupings. In contrast, the UK seems to provide more child-specific provision which has been viewed both as a blessing and a curse. Some implications of this latter point are the focus of the next two sections which look at this in the context of UK-based eating establishments and the tourist industry.

## **2.7 The negative connotations of specific child-friendly spaces**

In response to a survey carried out by *Tickbox.net* for *Pizza Express* in 2007, respondents were asked, 'When you hear the expression *child-friendly* restaurant which of the following associations do you make?' From fifteen choices, respondents mostly associated this expression with 'ball-pits and climbing frames', 'crayons and pen marks' and 'busy loud restaurant' and less with 'skilled chefs offering quality cuisine', 'romantic setting for a meal as a couple' and 'sophisticated décor'. Although offering an open choice to respondents may have been less restrictive and perhaps more revealing, these responses indicated a negative view of what 'child-friendly' may represent.

*Pizza Express* and *Giraffe* topped a UK survey undertaken by *Harden's* and baby food firm *Plum* (Rohrer, 2011) as best baby and toddler-friendly national chain restaurants. *Giraffe*, although defending its status as a child-friendly and family-friendly zone, was keen not to be viewed negatively as a child-only restaurant. To avoid this, Juliette Joffe, founder and director of *Giraffe* (quoted in Rohrer, 2011) says they have endeavoured to make their restaurants more grown-up in the evenings by 'not doing balloons' and 'finishing the kids meal deal at five'. She emphasised that 'People perceive us as a kid-friendly restaurant, but we want to be a restaurant that is child-friendly so the kids part doesn't come first'.



Several UK-based celebrity chefs/restaurateurs have defended the right of children to be welcomed into restaurants and served healthy food. Gordon Ramsay (*BBC News*, 2003) has emphasised how important this practice is for developing children's social skills, learning table manners and encouraging healthy eating. He also suggests children's presence makes restaurants less intimidating for everyone as they prevent them from being too quiet. Another well known restaurateur Raymond Blanc, reflecting on the success of his restaurants, also emphasises 'We actively/especially welcome children' (Milne, 2003; Blanc, 2010). However, he admits he had to fight his manager, chefs and the food and travel writers to do so when first opening his restaurant *Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons* in Oxfordshire (Milne, 2003; Knight, 2009). More recently Antonio Carluccio (Singh, 2012) has criticised special children's menus emphasising that 'Restaurants are for everybody'.

Nevertheless, there may be some restaurants that are not as enthusiastic to welcome younger diners. Recognising this, and drawing upon a survey of 8,000 people, 31% of who had been turned away from a restaurant or café with young children, Peter Harden (2011) used the aforementioned survey (see p. 47) to compile a guide to help parents select suitable eating places. Comments reacting to this survey in a *BBC News Magazine* (Rohrer, 2011) article headed 'Toddlers in restaurants – a social battlefield' raised some recurring themes in relation to the debate about young children's presence in eating establishments. These included children's respective noisy and chaotic behaviour, parents' disciplining techniques, adults' intolerance of young children, the problem with other people's children and the propensity of other countries to be more accepting of children's behaviour. However, apart from singling out Turkey as a country '...that seems

happy to accommodate boisterous children in restaurants’, Harden (quoted in Rohrer, 2011) dismisses this latter point of other countries being more accepting of children’s behaviour as a myth.

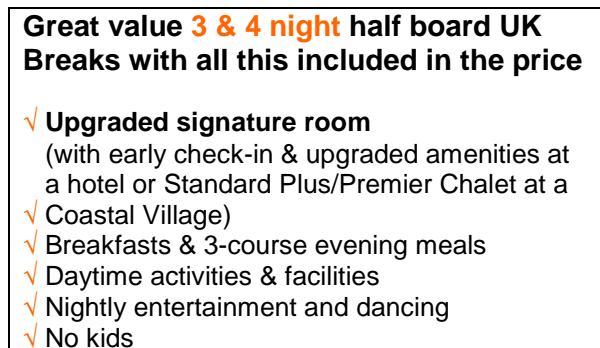
## **2.8 Child-free spaces**

Rather than using such guides to seek out eating places that welcome children, Lisette Butler from the *British Organisation of Non-parents (BON)* (*BBC News*, 2003) wanted to know which restaurants accept children so that she is able to avoid them when she is going out with her husband for some peace and quiet. She was also of the opinion that she is not alone in this view and there are times when adults, even those with children, want to be away from children for a while. However, she did not consider herself child-unfriendly.

Although *BON* is no longer in existence, Lisette was not alone in seeking child-free spaces. Other internet-based groups that represent child-free members such as *Kidding Aside* (the *British Childfree Association*), and a selection of books promulgate the merits of choosing to be childfree or childless (Shawne, 2005; Scott, 2009). Likewise, the website *Leavethembehind.com* (2006) defines itself as, ‘The home of holidays without children ...We love children but even the best of us deserve to leave them behind sometimes’. Additionally, a user’s request to the travel section of the website *theanswerbank.co.uk* (2006) for a company specialising in holidays with no children allowed resulted in a collection of companies who provide child-free holidays demonstrating a demand for these.

A UK based holiday company started to promote a range of ‘adult friendly’ or ‘adult only’ holidays in the 1990s which it suggested was set up in response to a huge number of adult-only holidaymakers. This company, in marketing its

holidays, uses phrases (on its websites and in its brochures) such as, ‘...if you are coming away without children, the chances are that you will want to relax without the sound of others’ excited offspring’; ‘...temptingly, they [our holidays] are exclusively for adults’; ‘It’s not that we don’t love children, it’s just that we feel that there should be some places exclusively for adults’. The company’s 2010 TV advertising campaign presents its holidays exclusively for adults on the basis that those who choose them will find themselves in good company in tranquil settings where they can simply relax. One of the points that makes their holidays so special, highlighted in a 2011 advertisement is ‘No children at any of our properties which means you can enjoy yourself – without having other people’s children around’ (The Open University, 2011). Interestingly, in 2012 the same company placed *No kids* on a tick list of benefits included in the hotel price:



**Figure. 2.1: Tick list of UK hotel benefits**  
**Source: The Open University (2012), p.46**

Despite these examples, ‘A member of TripAdvisor Ireland’ (2004) was disappointed that their Spanish hotel advertised as for “adults travelling without children” who expected ‘a hotel, not a crèche’, was amazed to find ‘that every other person was carrying a baby around or with several toddlers running around them’, ‘the constant screaming of babies at mealtimes’, and ‘kids’ discos’. This

scenario is not entirely surprising as Sophie Butler (2006) from the *Telegraph.co.uk* suggested that:

The travel industry loves families so much you'll struggle to find anywhere that promises a child-free holiday' even though 'Children can ruin a holiday – especially if they are not your own. Tantrums in the dining room, screams in the swimming pool, races in the corridors: rowdy youngsters can turn a peaceful hotel into a nerve-jangling holiday camp'.

In 2011 another British-based holiday company, in response to its own research study decided to meet the apparent demand for 'child-free' holidays by launching a range of hotels that are marketed as offering 'child-free environments as standard' (Sayid, 2011; *Relaxnews*, 2011). Nevertheless, in recognition of the difficulties in ensuring a genuinely 'child-free' holiday (see above) the *Thomson Gold* brochure has added the following clause in its A-Z Guide:

Although we don't accept bookings for child bookings here in the UK there may still be children's facilities, and we can't guarantee there'll be no children. This is because hoteliers may accept child bookings from other countries, or because a child can be booked as an adult and we can't stop this happening. Having said that problems with children being present are rare.

(Thomson Holidays, 2011, pp.70-71).

This issue of young children's presence in holiday resorts has also warranted discussion at travel and trade seminars that endeavour to find a balance between viewing children as the 'spenders of tomorrow', and the risk of alienating clients who want to holiday with [or without] families in tow (Perides, 2011).

Thus, the debate over children's presence in some social spaces demonstrates the difficulty this presents in reconciling these conflicting demands. As I show in the next section, the Spaniards are now being confronted with similar predicaments.

## **2.9 Spanish perceptions of the UK's attitudes to children**

There is less information written for Spanish families visiting the UK than for British families visiting Spain. One explanation for this is that fewer Spaniards visit the UK than vice versa (see pp. 43-44). In two travel books written for Spaniards visiting the UK, the abundance of places that families can visit with children are listed. They are also presented with the following pieces of advice when taking children into public spaces:

...you need to take into account that children under fourteen are prohibited from entering into pubs and bars unless they are establishments that have a family room or garden, and in some restaurants and hotels younger children may not be welcome because of how they behave as [some establishments] like to maintain peace and quiet (p.65).

(Montero, Plaza & Arroyo, 2010)

In general children [in London] are not well received in places where they may disturb [others] (p.357).

(El País-Aguilar, 2009 (*Guías Visuales: Londres*))

Several respondents, to a previously mentioned newspaper article (Santos, 2007) that drew attention to a sign denoting the prohibition of people with children (see p. 31) from a [wholesale] clothing shop in Murcia, emphasised the UK's

propensity to already exclude children from some public places. Some of them saw the extension of this practice, to Spain, being somehow related to the UK:

[To exclude children] is common practice in pubs and taverns in the UK.

(Inmigrante, 19.01.2007)

Signs [to exclude children] are common in the UK.

(José, 19.01.2007)

For many years the United Kingdom has [excluded children] from pubs and restaurants but no-one is shocked. The family I lived with in London told me that they were surprised by Spain's tolerance towards children.

(María, 19.01.2007)

Everyone knows that English pubs do not admit children.

(Pepe o anglès, 19.01.2007)

The UK's example [of excluding children] is being extended to Spain.

(Nipona, 19.01.2007)

Thus, it seems that some Spaniards have adopted a prevalent view that children may not be accepted in some shared spaces in the UK. However, congruent with this last comment, it seems that in 2010 Spain may have started to embrace some child-free spaces. For example, a headline in a Tarragona newspaper (*Diari de Tarragona*, 2010) announced that 'A hotel in Salou does not admit children so that they do not disturb their clients'. In the main body of the article, the responses from the public when asked about this practice were described as being *extreme*:

...some of them, speaking in a low voice, agreed this would not be a bad idea whereas others raised their hands to their head to signal their aberration and said they thought this initiative was out of place.

Ortiz de la Tierro (2010) also reported on a trend for Spanish hotels to exclude children from some hotels that have been designated especially for adults; partly linking this move to a lucrative niche market of 10.6 million Spaniards, aged between 35 and 49, who are eager to spend a weekend free from tears, bibs and runny noses. Although, acknowledging there may be some legal implications for not admitting children, she points out that some hotels get around this by just offering double rooms, no supplementary beds and no cots.

Similarly, in a subsequent article written by Belén (2010a) for a Spanish parenting website the issue of hotels that were exclusively for adults was discussed. In the article she proposed that the reason that proprietors had given for choosing to not accept children was that:

...children brought in little profit for them and clients who were searching for tranquillity found this impossible if little ones were staying there...on a legal basis it appeared that children could not be refused entry...but hotels got around this by saying that their facilities were unsuitable for young children.

Belén concluded the article by saying that there may be some justification for prohibiting children as some parents did not monitor their children properly and this resulted in them being badly brought up.

However, the majority of those who discussed a similar article entitled '[Hotels] that do not admit children' on another parenting website: *Bebes y mas* (2009) expressed their disapproval of this initiative, with many of the discussants

saying that they would be avoiding this hotel with or without children as they considered that this practice was discriminatory. On a third parenting website: *Peques y mas* (2009) the respondents to a blog about some *casas rurales* (country hotels/houses) that did not admit children reacted with similar comments. As exemplified in the following comment it seemed to be recognised that children may behave differently to adults but that this was no reason to not admit them:

The truth is that children are noisy, they laugh, they cry, they run but this is all part of their personality and what they are – children. I cannot imagine the type of person that would run an establishment in which they would not welcome children.

(Anon., *Peques y mas*, 14 May 2009)

Nevertheless, a minority of the discussants expressed the view that young children; especially babies, could sometimes disturb adults when they cried or misbehaved, and it was also recognised that some parents may not control their children adequately. However, the overall view was that it was better not to patronise these establishments whether you had children or not:

...I wouldn't go to one of these hotels...even if I was travelling alone or with my partner...

(Anon., *Peques y mas*, 15 May 2009)

Consequently, a similar picture is emerging in Spain to Britain in that there is a growing group of people who would prefer to holiday without children. However, this practice is not without its critics, and in the sources explored, Spanish participants seem to be less in favour of this initiative than the British respondents. Tellingly, Ortiz de la Tierro (2010) cited the manager of an adults' only hotel in



Mallorca, who reported that his clients, in this order, comprise Germans, Scandinavians, English and Spaniards. There is also further evidence from more recent articles to indicate that the move to create child-free or adult-only spaces is associated with the practice that is already acceptable in Great Britain (Cruz, 2012).

## **2.10 The exclusion of children from other public environments**

Although many examples of the exclusion of children from public spaces were associated with hotels and restaurants, several other instances of children being prohibited from other environments in the United Kingdom emerged in my review.

Following a story of a toddler being ordered out of his parents' wedding ceremony by an Anglican vicar for being too noisy, it was revealed that some bridal couples were opting for 'no children weddings' (Geoghegan, 2008; Dolan, 2008). Public responses to this story were also revealing about the British attitude to children. These ranged from comments such as: '...I think in this country children are treated like a hindrance and we still take the attitude 'children should be seen and not heard' (Julie Smith, 2008) to '...I don't want anybody else's children at our 'big day'. I do not want badly-behaved kiddies running up and down the aisle whilst taking our vows, nor do I want any screaming babies in the background... (Rachel, UK, 2008).

Two articles; the first from a British perspective and the other from a Spanish point of view offered advice to readers considering flying with young children. They both commenced with their respective descriptions of children on an aeroplane:

...babies at high altitude are much more frightening than snakes. They're noisier, their nappies are far more venomous and you're not allowed to chop off their heads... (Rudd, 2009a).

It is true that children are active, curious and at times noisy, and no-one would expect them to act like adults (some adults are worse than children)... (Belén, 2010b).

Rudd (2009b), in a second article for *The Sunday Times* expressed his surprise by the extent of the negativity of some readers who, in response to his first *humorous* article had called for children and families to be banned from planes. The second Spanish article, cited above, also referred to an American article (Pawlowski, 2010) that resulted in some respondents calling for babies and young children to be banned from long-haul flights. On the same theme, stories in newspapers such as the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* reported on the results of a survey by the *Business Travel and Meetings Show* (2011). This survey polled 1,000 business class travellers about their pet hates on flights revealing that three quarters of them put 'noisy children' at the top of their list. In response to this poll, *The Daily Express* (Ingham, 2011) featured the following headline on the front page, 'Adults only flights: spare passengers from noisy children, airlines are urged'.

Stories discussing the implications of this survey (Ingham, 2011; Dykins, 2011; *Mail Online*, 2011) debated the issue of banning children from flights, or introducing child-free areas. Some of the reasons given for this possible segregation were associated with children being 'annoying', 'irritating' and 'disturbing adults' peace'. On-line surveys (Holland, 2010; Holland, 2011; *Parent Dish*, 2011) reacting to the issue of banning children from planes indicated that

approximately 70% of participants were supportive of child-free zones. Additionally, forum comments on this topic (*Business Traveller*, 2011; *Parent Dish*, 2011; Ingham, 2011; *Mail Online*, 2011) evoked a range of negative terms that were assigned to children (and also directed at their parents/carers for failing to control them). Thus, from these selected examples, several descriptors of, and assumptions about young children's behaviour can be identified, in that they are 'noisy'; 'a hindrance'; 'badly-behaved'; 'annoying'; 'irritating' and they 'require space'; 'run around'; 'scream' and 'laugh and talk loudly'.

In defence of the right to bring children on to planes, three out of four letters published in the *Metro* (2011) were opposed to adult-only flights reminding those in favour of them that they were '...once children too' (Samuel; Tomlins, 2011, p.53) and that 'The prejudiced view of some airline passengers simply underlines the sad British intolerance of children in general' (Fawkes, 2011, p.53). Consequently, this intolerance is putting pressure on the gatekeepers' of environments to think about putting restrictions on children's movements.

## **2.11 Restrictions on children's presence**

The problematic connotations associated with children's behaviour have also contributed to restricting rather than banning children's presence in some public spaces. Thus, children are permitted as long as they (or their parents) conform to certain rules. On the following website, that lists family friendly Kent hotels, visitors to the site are advised that even *family friendly* hotels may have very specific rules in relation to children:

These Kent hotels are perfect for families whether you are looking for a short break or a holiday location. Families can often miss out on

great places to stay due to the hotels' door policy. However, with these Kent Child and Family Friendly Hotels you can be sure that families are welcome and even encouraged. **Please ensure that you read the 'Restrictions' in the fact column when you click through to a given hotel as many have very specific rules regarding children and kids** [original emphasis].

(*Kent Family Friendly Hotels*, 2009).

The *BBC News* website (*BBC News*, 2008c) reported on a story involving a *JD Wetherspoon's* establishment (who have a chain of 683 pubs in the UK) where an adult was refused to be served with alcohol as there was a child in his party. This incident resulted in a two-drink rule for adults with young children as a means of preventing 'bad toddler behaviour' on the premises. Looking at the quantity of postings on websites (*BBC News*, 2008c) in response to this story suggested that the place of children is a popular issue of public debate. A corresponding BBC poll comprising 3978 votes was more or less equally split with 30% of respondents opposed to the *Wetherspoon's* two drink ruling, 38% supporting the stance and 30% wanting children banned from pubs altogether (Joyce, 2008).

This, coupled with the record number of complaints that '*The Good Pub Guide 2009*' (Aird and Stapley, 2008) received in relation to 'badly behaved children' spoiling things for adults (Wallop, 2008), indicates that 'family-friendly' can only exist if children's behaviour and presence is acceptable to adults. According to '*The Good Pub Guide 2009*', 90 per cent of the 55,000 pubs listed do allow children. Regardless of this practice, comments from landlords and customers ranged from accusations that 'pubs transform into crèches and play schools' to criticisms levelled at parents who are bad-mannered, ill-disciplined and fail to control their offspring. Additionally, children were referred to as 'baby lager

louts' and 'disruptive' and some of the readers of the guide, wanted a 'no children' logo to help them select pubs that did not admit children (Meikle, 2008).

Thus, it appears that establishments such as pubs, in attempting to create 'family-friendly' spaces may have produced the opposite. Alasdair Aird (2008), one of the editors of the guide, reiterates a common theme in his introduction that, "This is a peculiarly British problem – in continental restaurants and cafes it's normal to see families with children, not normal to see kids spoil things for grown-ups." This is echoed by Valerie Elliott (2008), Consumer Editor of *Times-online* who suggests that, 'An increasing trend towards more "family friendly" pubs has not created the atmosphere of similar establishments on the Continent.' Consequently, it appeared that little had changed since 1993. The following extract is from an article published in *The Independent* newspaper just before the implementation of new licensing laws; these enabled pubs to apply for a 'children's certificate', allowing them to admit children of any age:

On the continent, children are welcomed in cafes, bars and restaurants. In this country, pubs have long been an infant-free zone, while a glance through hotels and restaurant guides reveals restrictions from 'No children under five' through 'No children under 10, 12, 13' to the blunt 'No children admitted'. Are English children really so bad-mannered and disruptive?  
(Lacey, 1993)

Bel Mooney (2009), columnist from the *Daily Mail*, writing in response to a grandmother's concern that she is treated with hostility when she goes out with her grandchildren in the UK, offers the following piece of advice:

It all depends on how kids behave. In France and Italy, they're far more used to going out with their parents, sitting at the table and taking part in adult life, rather than expecting to be the indulged king and queen of the feast. If your children are taught not to yell and run about (unless they're in the garden) they will welcome you anywhere – and if people don't want to sit near you, well, that's their loss (p. 53).

Although using France and Italy as examples, Mooney's response is based upon a view that as children in other countries spend more time with adults, their behaviour becomes attuned to adult-created environments. This is a model that this grandparent should aspire to for her grandchildren if she wants them to be accepted in UK society. From this perspective, children are excluded from some adult-centred spaces because they are perceived as behaving badly. This raises the question as to where they will learn these adult-desired behaviours that they are supposedly learning by being part of adult life in France and Italy. I now present a tool I have designed for visually representing integrated and segregated spaces for children and adults.

## **2.12 The social location of children**

### **Mapping shared and separate spaces on to a diagram**

The topic of adults' attitudes to young children's presence in intergenerational spaces appears to be an under-explored area of research. The recently produced *Child Friendly Community Assessment Tools (The Child Friendly Cities Research Initiative, The Innocenti Research Centre of UNICEF and Childwatch International, 2011a; 2011b; 2011c)*, provide useful indicators as to what features could be classified as child-friendly in a community. However, in the absence of

tools available to allow the range of child-centred, intergenerational and adult-only spaces to be represented visually, I have designed a tool. Shared (intergenerational) and separate (adult-only/child-only spaces) can be plotted on this tool. The results are intended to be used as a stimulus for discussion especially with regard to spaces that are arbitrarily designated as either child-centred/adult-centred. To demonstrate how this tool works, I have plotted examples of explicit and implicit shared and segregated spaces on this diagram. The corresponding spaces are listed on Table 2.1; several of these spaces have been discussed in this chapter and others represent general examples. As demonstrated on diagram Figure 2.2 when contrasting interpretations of what is considered to be ‘child-friendly’ are assigned to different spaces, this may contribute to the segregation of children and their possible exclusion from everyday life.

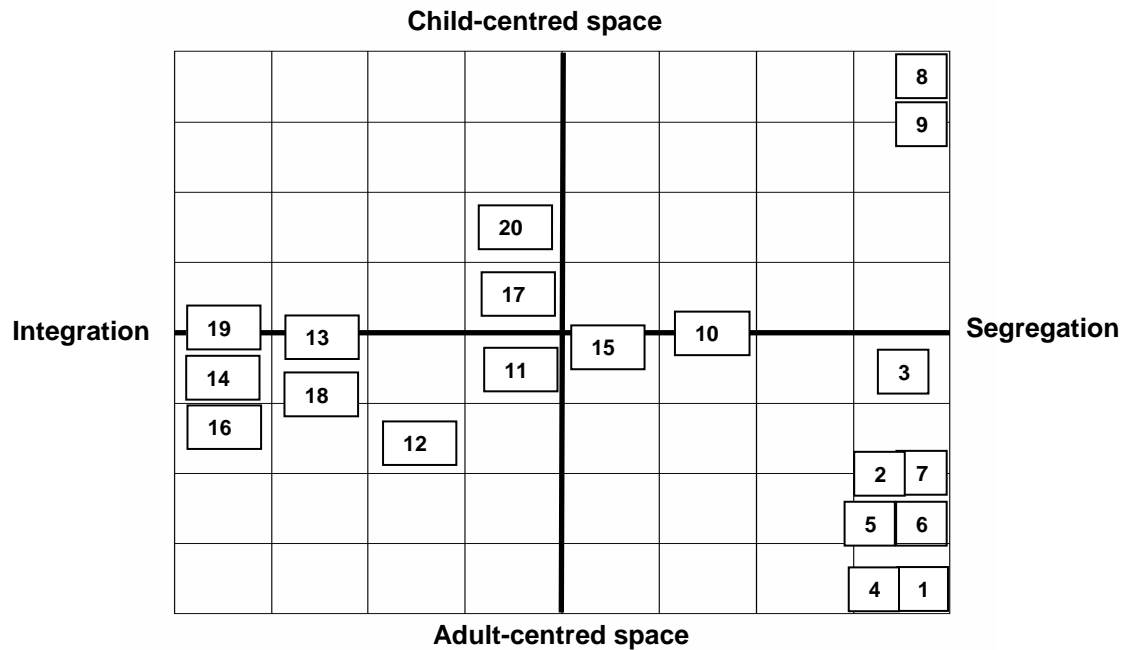


Figure 2.2: Diagram of explicit and implicit child-centred and adult-centred spaces

Table 2.1: Key to accompany Figure 2.2 - Category of space, Number on diagram and example

Category of space	Number on diagram and example
Adult-only space	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 18 Night club</li> <li>Murcian shop with notice banning children (p.31)</li> <li>Outdoor space with mosquito device (p.39)</li> <li><i>British Organization of Non-parents (BON)</i> (p.49)</li> <li><i>Leavethembehind.com</i> (p.49)</li> <li>No-children hotel (pp.54-55)</li> <li>No-children wedding (p.56)</li> </ol>
Child-only space (except for supervising or vetted adults)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's Day-care centre</li> <li>Playground</li> </ol>
Children admitted with restrictions i.e. time, space, behaviour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor area where ball games are banned (p.34)</li> <li>Kent family-friendly hotels (with restrictions) (pp.58-59)</li> <li>Pub/restaurant with rules i.e. <i>Wetherspoons</i> (pp.59-60)</li> </ol>
Intergenerational space	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Center Parcs</i> (p.37)</li> <li>Child-friendly city i.e. Barcelona (p.44)</li> <li>Shop displaying 'Family-friendly sign' (pp.35-36)</li> <li>Intergenerational restaurant i.e. Bologna (p.41)</li> <li>Family restaurant i.e. <i>Giraffe</i> (p.47)</li> <li>Gordon Ramsay; Raymond Blanc and Antonio Carluccio restaurants (p.48)</li> <li>Family wedding</li> <li>Kent family-friendly hotels (without restrictions) (pp.58-59)</li> </ol>



Additionally, adults who want to avoid children and families may shun child-friendly/family-friendly spaces, and opt for adult-only venues. There may also be some debate about ownership of certain shared environments when children move between specially designed child-centred spaces such as playgrounds, nurseries and into what previously may have been considered adult-centred spaces i.e. pubs, hotels and restaurants. Consequently, the UK's apparent practice of creating 'child-friendly' spaces and areas may result in separating the different generations; if children and adults spend more time in their own spaces, there is less mixing of ages. The intention for the separate provision may also be important as illustrated in this response from a practitioner, interviewed for my fieldwork research in Spain, when asked if there should be areas specially designated for children in restaurants, hotels, shopping centres etc.:

If these areas are created for the benefit of the children – 'Yes' – but if these areas are there to remove children from adult social spaces for the convenience of the adults – 'No'.

(Murcia Setting 5, Interview Marcela, 15.05.08)

## **2.13 Summary**

In this chapter I have aimed to build up a picture of the ways in which children; especially young children are represented in a broad range of mass media sources. By following up some of the public's responses, I have provided some insight into adults' perceptions and conceptualisations of young children in the UK and Spain.

In summary, children and their families in these two societies are faced with similar social problems and child-rearing dilemmas. This picture indicates that neither country provides a utopian environment in which to bring up young children. Despite UK claims to the contrary, Spanish news stories and related

comments offer no reason to believe that Spanish children are better behaved than children in the UK. Nevertheless, framed within a UK perspective an almost obsessive theme has emerged of a rather idealistic picture of Spain, often held up as an example of a southern European country that has a more positive disposition towards the presence of young children than that of the UK.

Congruent with the concerns of the UNCRC Committee (2008), outlined earlier in the chapter, attitudes towards children's location in social and physical spaces are negatively represented in the UK arena. It also appears that young children in the UK have become the object of some journalists' *humorous* articles just for displaying 'childlike' behaviour such as crying or talking loudly and have been assigned a nuisance status.

Some examples of the UK's somewhat pessimistic view of children have also been highlighted in some Spanish-based sources. Notwithstanding this, in their responses to news stories, there are also emerging examples, indicating that Spaniards may be not quite as tolerant of children as presented by the idealistic images of Spain, as a child-loving nation in the UK sources. However, from my analysis of the mass media sources it still appears less culturally acceptable to express an intolerance of children in Spain than in the UK, or to question their presence in intergenerational spaces. Although both societies are grappling over the sharing of intergenerational spaces, this seems to be far more pronounced in the UK. This is evident in the increased provision of child-focused spaces and adult-only spaces.

In conclusion, there appears to be a need for a further in-depth analysis of societal attitudes to young children to look at how these may manifest themselves in practice in both intergenerational shared spaces, and early years settings.

Consequently, one aim of this comparative study has been to open the way to investigate specific questions and possible differences in child-focused practices in diverse contexts.

In the next chapter I move on to look at some of the possible underpinning explanations for these apparent differences in opinions, attitudes and practices that have been portrayed in these mass media sources with the aim of questioning to what extent these may be based on perceptions or misconceptions. To do so, I attempt to contextualise some of the key themes and issues arising from the mass media sources within the legal frameworks, social and educational policies, and the curricular frameworks in Spain and the United Kingdom that impact on young children's induction into these societies.

## **Chapter 3: Frameworks and policies in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain**

### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter I build upon my discussion from Chapter 2, in which I explored mass media sources. The key aim is to provide a context for some of the themes and issues arising from these sources. To do so I draw upon the social and educational policies, legal frameworks and curricular frameworks of the two societies that impact on the lives of young children. Where available, I include information specific to the two respective areas in Spain and England; Murcia and Kent, where my research study was situated.

To consider why the UK and Spain restrict or prohibit children from some public spaces I look at factors that may underpin these exclusions. These factors might include birth rates and trends in working patterns. I also consider the two countries' political agendas, and to what extent children and families are made a priority; including information on funding that is allocated to these groups.

In comparing pre-compulsory education and care in the UK and Spain, I look at this in terms of its compensatory function, the demands of the workforce and its care/education priorities. As I show, both countries have almost universal provision for 3-5 year olds but this is considerably lower for 0-3 year olds. After looking at some implications of this, I discuss statutory school starting ages.

To consider how these implications may restrict children's presence in some intergenerational spaces, I examine the two somewhat arbitrary legal frameworks. I also reflect on what these say about protecting children, and their competence and responsibility. Following this I return to some of the topics introduced in Chapter 2 to question the rhetoric that underpinned these. To do so I compare

some data on children's health and safety in the UK and Spain. In particular, I look at the prevalence of non-accidental injuries and deaths in the two countries. I also highlight some of the measures put in place to safeguard and protect children. Notwithstanding the need to view these data with caution, it appears that Spain may be less risk averse than the UK. However, as emphasised, a consequence of this difference could be a higher incidence of childhood accidents. Whilst I make no claims that decreasing birth rates render adults child-unfriendly, they are likely to impact on specific provision made for children. Therefore, I begin my discussion by presenting some information on these rates. The majority of the data that are referred to in the next section were collected at the end of 2010 and thus reflect this period.

### **3.1 Birth rates in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain**

Following a period of decreasing fertility rates, from 2003 – 2008 there was an increase in the average number of children per woman in several European countries (Eurostat, 2009; Eurostat, 2010a). The number of births in the UK between 2001 and 2007 increased by 15.4 per cent from 669,123 to 772,245 (Tromans, Natamba and Jefferies, 2009). In 2009, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), (2010a) the provisional Total Fertility Rate (TFR\*) for the UK was 1.94 children per woman. Although still considered to be at a high level, this represented a small decrease in UK fertility compared with 2008, when the TFR\* reached 1.96 children per woman. The last time UK fertility was higher than 2009 was in 1973 when the TFR was 2.00 (ONS, 2009). In turn, the figures in Table 3.1 indicate a slightly higher birth rate for Kent of 2.07 when compared to the average rate for England which was 1.96 in 2009.

**Table 3.1: England and Kent: Live births (occurrence within/outside of marriage, total fertility rate, number of children born to foreign born mothers) 2009**

Area of usual residence of mother	Live births	Within marriage	Outside marriage	Total fertility rate (TFR)*	Number of children born to foreign born mothers
<b>England</b>	671,058	364,738	306,320	1.96	170,488
<b>Kent</b>	17,144	8,657	8,487	2.07	2,613

**Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2010a, 2010b)

\*TFR is the average number of live children that a group of women would bear if they experienced age-specific fertility rates of the calendar years in question throughout their childbearing span.

Spain also experienced a rise in the number of births from 405,313 in 2001 to 491,138 in 2007 representing an increase of 17.4 per cent. There were 492,931 children born in Spain during 2009 which was 1793 more than in 2007. Also based on figures for 2009, Spain's TFR was 1.40, which was a slight decrease from 2008 when it was 1.46 (see Table 3.2). Nevertheless, Spain had a much higher birth rate in 1976 when the TFR was 2.80. Table 3.2 demonstrates that in 2008 Murcia had a higher birth rate than the average for Spain.

**Table 3.2: Spain and Murcia: Live births (occurrence within/outside of marriage, total fertility rate, number of children born to foreign born mothers) 2008**

Area of usual residence of mother	Live births	Within marriage	Outside marriage	Total fertility rate (TFR)	Number of children born to foreign born mothers
<b>Spain</b>	519,779	347,468	172,311	1.46	108,915
<b>Murcia</b>	19,386	13,693	5,693	1.61	5061

**Source:** Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) (2010)

It is also worth noting that the number of children born to foreign born mothers has impacted on the birth rate in both the UK (Tromans *et al.*, 2009) and in Spain (INE, 2010). With regard to Spain, this accounted for one in five births, and in the UK one in four births. However, Murcia (INE, 2010) had above national average figures for children born to foreign born mothers (1 in 4) whereas Kent's figure

(approximately 1 in 6) was below the national average for the UK. I now move on to consider how these data impact on women's employment.

### **3.2 Motherhood and female employment**

The United Kingdom and Spain are two of five European countries where the average age for becoming a mother for the first time was the highest (between 29 and 30 years) (Eurostat, 2009). In both these countries, first-time mothers over 30 years old outnumbered younger mothers. At the European Council in March 2007, leaders set up an alliance for families; one of the aims being to encourage family-friendly policies. These were defined as providing financial support for raising a family, the provision of care services (for children and for the dependent elderly), and flexible working times (Eurostat, 2010b).

Tertiary-educated women in Spain tend to have more children (Eurostat, 2010b) than those who are not. In turn, figures for 2007 from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), (2009) indicate that the unemployment rate among women (with the equivalent tertiary qualification) was much higher than men. This is despite the fact that graduates in Spain (especially women) are in roles for which they are over-qualified (EACEA, 2009). Contrary to this, the unemployment rate among women in the UK with this level of qualification was lower than that of men. However, government statistics (Portanti and Whitworth, 2009) indicated that over one-fifth of British women, particularly educated, professional women were likely to remain childless.

As can be seen in Table 3.3, the employment rates for males are higher than those for female employment, in both Spain and the United Kingdom. Additionally, as demonstrated in Table 3.3, female workers were more likely to be

employed on a part-time basis than males in both countries. Nevertheless, Spain has a lower rate of part-time employment for both males and females than the United Kingdom. As Lewis (2006) suggests, in the UK part-time work has enabled women to reconcile work with family responsibilities; namely looking after children. It is also noted that in the light of the economic crisis according to data collected in April 2012 (Eurostat, 2012) Spain has an unemployment rate of 24.3% in comparison to that of the UK which is 8.1%.

**Table 3.3: Employment rates male and female, Spain and UK**

	<b>Male employment (2008)</b>	<b>Female employment (2008)</b>	<b>Male part-time employment (2007)</b>	<b>Female part-time employment (2007)</b>
<b>Spain</b>	73.5	54.9	3.9	22.7
<b>United Kingdom</b>	77.3	65.8	9.4	41.6

**Sources:** Eurostat, 2010b, p.286; Ramb, Eurostat 2008, p.5

Although their study was undertaken over ten years ago, Holdsworth and Dale (1998) found that Spanish women were more likely to abandon their jobs when they got married before having children than British women. Brandis (2003) suggests that this practice could be related to the traditional “cultural values” of the female role. This is resonant with a report from the *Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales* (Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) who released figures indicating that 34,816 Spaniards (33,335 (95.7%) of them women and 1,481 (4.3% men)) gave up their jobs to bring up a family; signifying a clear divide in responsibility for childcare between women and men (EFE, 2008). This trend could be related to the lack of availability of public child care in Spain or that male remuneration tends to be higher. However, it could be linked to a belief that childcare provided by parents (particularly mothers) plays an important part



in contributing to the cultural model of what is a 'good childhood' (Pfau-Effinger, 2006).

For example, looking at the attitudes of 11 countries' populations towards the well-being of pre-school children and waged work of mothers, Pfau-Effinger (2006), drawing upon the 2002 European Social Survey (ESS), reported that 52.2% of Spanish respondents thought that 'a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works' in comparison to only 38.4% respondents from Great Britain. Nevertheless, 80.4% of respondents in Spain believed that waged work 'is best for women's independence' as opposed to 55.3% respondents in Great Britain. Thus, based on these figures there appeared to be a conflict between consideration for children's wellbeing and women's quality of life. However, in the UK this conflict may be somewhat reconciled by a predominance of the male breadwinner/female part-time carer provider model (Pfau-Effinger, 2006).

In Spain this reconciliation may be more problematic where there are fewer opportunities for part-time work (Hobson, Duvander and Halldén, 2006) and women may find themselves giving up work to care for children, or turning towards informal sources (see pp. 91-92 of this chapter). As emphasised by Pfau-Effinger (2006), '...informal and semi-informal care takes place in a field of contradictory cultural values and in institutional contexts...' (p.150). Therefore, it is necessary to recognise that cultural influences may take precedence over structural ones in relation to making personal child-rearing decisions. There also appears to be an absence of research that has looked at affective reasons; such as the pleasure gained from being with children in relation to why individuals choose not to go out to work.

In the light of these demographic patterns, employment trends and possible cultural differences, I now move on to look at the provision made by the two societies for their youngest citizens and their families to consider the relative importance given to these groups within the wider political agenda.

### **3.3 Politics, children and the family**

In the UK, children and families, within the child-friendly or family-friendly context, appear to be important concerns for politicians from all major parties. New Labour, under the leadership of Tony Blair (1997-2007) and Gordon Brown (2007-2010), put children and families high on its government agenda (Driver and Martell, 2002; Moss, 2006; Lister, 2006). They introduced initiatives such as the document *Supporting Families* (Home Office 1998), the *National Family and Parenting Institute* (now the Family and Parenting Institute, 2011e), the Sure Start Children's Centres programme (Directgov, 2010a) and the National Childcare Strategy, (DfEE, 1998).

The Conservative leader David Cameron, prior to being elected Prime Minister in May 2010, in a speech at the 2008 Spring Forum in Gateshead (BBC News, 2008d, 2008e, 2008f; Wright, 2008) set out his vision for a 'family friendly' Britain to make the UK a better place to bring up children. This mission continued into the election campaign; one of the themes in the Conservative Manifesto (2010) being [to] 'Make Britain the most family-friendly country in Europe', whilst blaming Labour for doing the opposite. Nick Clegg, speaking as leader of the Liberal Democrat Party, prior to becoming Deputy Prime Minister in May 2010 suggested that 'The blunt truth is that we are not a child friendly society' (BBC *Politics Show*, 2008).

Since forming a coalition government in May 2010, Cameron and Clegg have avowed to make the United Kingdom a more family friendly society. In the document '*The Coalition: our programme for government*' (HM Government, 2010), a section entitled *Families and Children* listed family friendly measures. These included ending child poverty, protecting children from excessive commercialisation and premature sexualisation, supporting child care provision and the Sure Start programme (Directgov, 2010a), reviewing family tax credits, encouraging shared parenting and parental leave, helping families with multiple problems, and conducting a review of family law. Nevertheless, at the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham in October 2010, George Osborne; Chancellor of the Exchequer for the Coalition government announced their intention to cut child benefits for high-earners (King, 2010). Withdrawal of financial support for Sure Start children's centres has also resulted in some of these being threatened with closure (Richardson, 2011; 4Children, 2011).

As leader of Spain's socialist government; Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), the Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, (2004 – to November 2011 – when Mariano Rajoy of Partido Popular (PP) was elected) pledged to create universal nursery education for children under three. He introduced the '*peque-cheque*' or '*cheque-bebe*' a 'baby-cheque' of 2,500 euros for every baby (with legal residence in Spain) born or adopted from July 3rd 2007 onwards (Madrid Agencias: ABC, 2007). The government's '*Plan Educa3*' initiative (Gobierno de España/Ministerio de Educación, 2007) was aimed at creating new education places for children from 0 to 3 years, with the intention of responding to families' need to reconcile their family, personal and professional lives (Eurydice/EACEA, 2010b & 2010c). To achieve these aims an investment of

1,087 million EUROS, between 2008 and 2012, has been allocated of which the Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Communities will each contribute 50%. Despite these initiatives, Spain's socialist government has been criticised by organizations such as the Instituto de Política Familia (IPF) (2010) for not making families a political priority. At a subsequent press conference (EFE, 2010b), Mariano Martinez, vice-president of the IPF described Spain as a 'miserable country' in terms of the amount of help it gives to families. In turn, in the midst of an economic crisis, the government announced that the aforementioned '*cheque-bebé*' was to be discontinued from January 2011 (C.M. Madrid: El Pais, 2010; del Barrio, 2010).

Although recognising that both UK and Spanish governments have been forced into making spending cuts across many areas, the relative attention respective governments assign to their child-friendly and family-friendly agendas are likely to be reflected in how highly they are made a political priority and in the subsequent funding that is allocated to these causes.

### **3.4 Child and Family Policies and Initiatives in Spain and England**

To explore how some of this political rhetoric translates into practice, I now draw upon available statistical data to present information on some of the two countries' policies and initiatives aimed at children and families.

#### **Financial assistance to families with children**

In accordance with all industrialised countries that have a package of benefits, subsidies and services to help parents with the cost of raising children (Bradshaw, 2006), both the United Kingdom and Spain make some financial provision for

child benefits and family allowances. As Bradshaw (2006) suggests these packages may impact on the number of children women have and when. As can be seen in Table 3.4 showing universal child benefits and Table 3.5 listing means-tested family allowances, the extent of, and the recipients of these benefits and allowances vary between the two countries. These benefits and allowances are also subject to constant change and modification, especially in the context of the uncertain economic situation that proliferated in the two countries post 2008.

**Table 3.4: Child benefits in Spain and United Kingdom 2010**

	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Spain</b>	One-off tax deduction or allowance after the child's birth	€2,500	All resident mothers	
	Up to the child's 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday	€100 a month	Mothers	
<b>United Kingdom*</b>	Up to the child's 16 <sup>th</sup> birthday or 20 <sup>th</sup> if not in higher education	Monthly: £86.67 (first child); £57.20 (each other child) Weekly: £20.30 (first child) £14.30 (each other child)	The parent or guardian caring for the child	Supplement of £14.30 a week for people bringing up orphans or families with one dead or unavailable parent

**Source:** Glaser *et al.* (2010)

\*Note: as from January 2013 Child Benefit income tax charges will be applied to families with one earner in higher rate tax band (HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), 2012).

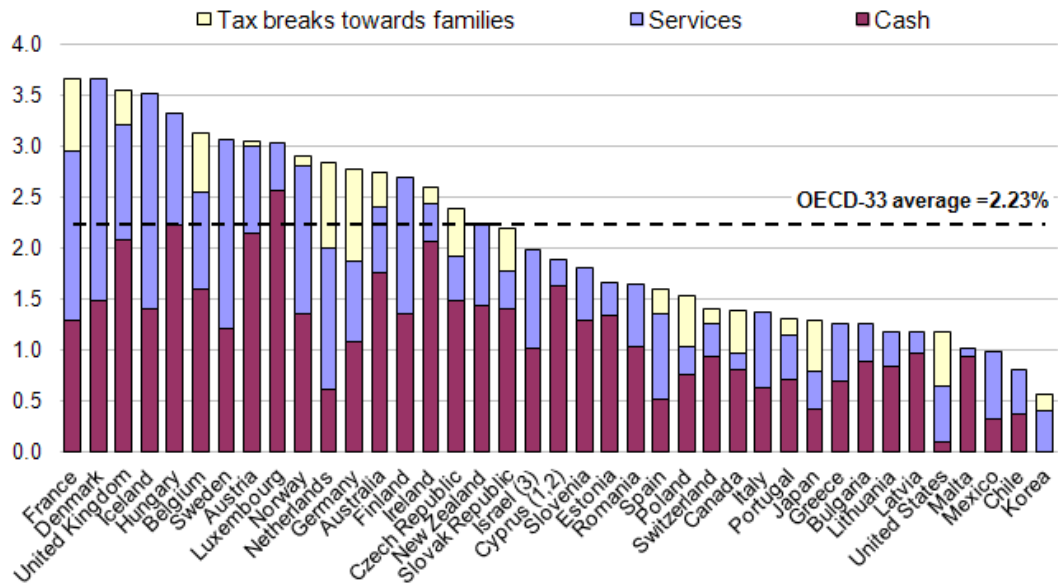
**Table 3.5: Other Family Allowances in Spain and United Kingdom 2010**

	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Spain</b>	One-off payment after childbirth	€1,000	Means-tested; large families or mother with disability greater than 65 per cent	Granted to large families after birth or adoption of a child
	Either up to the age 3 or 18	€41.67 (children under age 3 non-disabled); €24.25 (over 18 non-disabled); €83.33 (under 18 disabled at least 33 per cent)	Means-tested (maximum yearly earnings or family income of €11,264,01) except in case of disability	Disabled children over 18 receive higher benefits (65 per cent or 75 per cent of disability)
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Up to child's 7 <sup>th</sup> birthday	£35.65 (parents aged 16-17 years old); £59.15 (parents over 18)	Means-tested	
	Parents of child under 16; For childcare element parent must be working in paid work for more than 16 hours a week	Child tax credit on a sliding scale of up to £2,300; Additional contribution to childcare costs for working parents of 80p in the £ up to a maximum of £140 per week for one child or £240 for two or more children	Subject to a means test on a sliding scale	Eligibility and benefit being reviewed by coalition government (May 2010)

**Source:** Glaser *et al.* (2010)

In the United Kingdom, the Labour Government committed themselves to eradicating child poverty by 2020 and halving it by 2010 (C. James, 2009). To support this initiative, tax credits were introduced to redistribute income to lower-income earners with children; Working Family Tax Credit was launched in 1999 and also included a childcare credit. Children's Tax Credit was introduced in 2001. However, both these initiatives were replaced by Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit in 2003. Child benefit, had continued to be a universal benefit paid for all children who have a 'right to reside' in the UK, until coming under threat by the Coalition Government in October 2010 (see p. 74). The £100 Maternity Payment was replaced in 2000 by a £200 Sure Start Maternity Grant for low-income expectant mothers, and the Maternity Grant was increased to £500 in 2002. In 2009 a universal Health in Pregnancy Grant of £190 was re-introduced dependent on mothers receiving ante-natal care but was discontinued in 2011 (Ben-Galim, 2011). The launch of the Child Trust Fund (CTF) in 2005 gave each child, born after 1 September 2002, a £250 voucher at birth, which was to be invested until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday with low-income families receiving an extra £250 (C. James, 2009). However, this was reduced and then phased out in 2010 when the Coalition government was elected (Directgov, 2010b).

Despite the UK's child benefit package being described as generous (Bradshaw, 2006), Spain has been cited as a country that spends a low percentage of its public expenditure on child benefits (Levy, 2003; Bianculli, Jenne and Jordana, 2010). This is compatible with OECD (2010) figures (see Fig. 3.1) that highlight the difference in public spending on family benefits between the United Kingdom and Spain.



**Figure 3.1: Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures, in per cent of GDP** (Source: OECD Family Database (2010))

Spain targets a range of financial help and benefits to large families (*familias numerosas*). Assistance includes help with food costs, clothing, medicines, housework, child care costs, health and hygiene products, and baby and child accessories (Comunidad Autónoma de la Región de Murcia (CARM), 2010a).

According to figures from the Region de Murcia (CARM, 2010b) there were 23,748 families registered as being '*familias numerosas*' in this region. A booklet has been produced by The Region of Murcia (CARM, 2010c) detailing all the resources available to families. The regional specificity of this highlights how national statistics for Spain may not provide a wholly accurate representation of the variance of local government initiatives between regions.

#### Work-life balance and childcare

In the UK, throughout the life of New Labour, maternity leave provision, paid paternity leave and flexible working hours were all increased; partly as a result of the EC parental leave directive (Council Directive 96/34/EC). In 2000, the



Government launched a Work-Balance Campaign to raise employers' awareness of developing policies to allow employees to balance work with their outside lives. The Employment Act 2002, implemented in the following April, introduced two weeks' paid paternity leave and the right for parents with children under six to request flexible working patterns (C. James, 2009).

In Spain, groups advocating for gender equality in conjunction with the 2007 Spanish Gender Equality Law (*Ley Organica 3/2007, para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres*), alongside the generic right to work-life balance have driven social policy (Escobedo in Moss, 2009). As a result, a two-week Paternity leave funded by Social Security was introduced alongside a commitment to increase this to four weeks by 2012. Nevertheless, as emphasised by Escobedo (in Moss, 2009) legislative reforms have resulted in small improvements and changes but have not adequately addressed key issues such as the short duration of paid leave around birth, the low uptake of unpaid parental leave, funding for atypical workers i.e. the self-employed, temporary employees and the issue of leave for children's sickness. To give an overview of the parental policies in the UK and Spain, based on available figures at the time of writing this chapter in 2010, the main features of these have been summarised in Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6: Parental policies - United Kingdom**

	United Kingdom	Spain
<b>Maternity</b>		
Duration	52 weeks (26 weeks are mandatory)	16 weeks (6 mandatory weeks)
Benefit	<p><i>Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)</i> 39 weeks are paid (13 unpaid): 6 weeks at 90 per cent of average individual earnings with no ceiling; 33 at a flat rate of £124.88; <i>Maternity Allowance (MA)</i> For mothers not eligible for <i>SMP</i> who have worked 26 weeks in the 66 weeks before the child's birth can take £128.88 per week or 90 per cent of average gross earnings for 39 weeks whichever is lower</p>	100 per cent of individual earnings up to a ceiling of €3,166 a month in 2009. €527.74 per month or €17.57 a day) is paid for 42 days to all employed women who do not meet eligibility requirements.
Eligibility	<p><i>SMP</i>: Mothers must have been employed by the same UK employer for at least 26 weeks into the 15<sup>th</sup> week her baby is due and earn at least £97 a week before tax; <i>MA</i>: Mothers must have been employed or self-employed for at least 26 Of the 66 weeks before the week the baby is due and have earned an average of £30 in any 13 weeks in the 66 weeks before the baby is due</p>	Affiliated employees with 180 days of contribution in the previous 7 years
Notes	<p>Mothers on a low income can claim <i>Sure Start Maternity Grant</i>. This is a one-off payment (£500 in 2010) to help towards the cost of a new baby. The grant comes from the Social Fund and does not have to be paid back; <i>Healthy Start scheme</i> for mothers on low income or under 18 years old: free milk, infant formula, vitamins, fruit and vegetables</p>	10 weeks can be transferred to the father. Non-eligible mothers entitled to 100 per cent minimum wage for 6 weeks
<b>Paternity</b>		
Duration	2 weeks;	13 days plus two mandatory days
Benefit	<p><i>Statutory Pay (SPP)</i> Paid if wife, partner or civil partner gives birth or adopts a child. If average weekly earnings are £97 or more (before tax) OSP is paid for one or two consecutive weeks at £124.88 or 90% of average weekly wage earnings if this is less</p>	100 per cent of individual earnings
Eligibility	Employed father, mother's husband or partner	Affiliated employees with 180 days of contributions in the previous 7 years
Notes		2 days have to be used immediately after the child's birth
<b>Parental</b>		
Duration	13 weeks per child and parent (maximum 4 weeks per year until the child's fifth birthday)	3 years During the first year, return to the same job position is protected, after the first year, job protection is restricted to a job of the same category.
Benefit	Unpaid leave	Unpaid leave Workers taking leave are credited with social security contributions, which affect pension accounts, health cover and new Maternity or Paternity leave entitlements, for the first two years in the private sector and for the whole period in the public sector.
Eligibility	Parents or formal guardians	No job tenure requirements
Notes	<p>Individual right Leave may be taken in blocks or in multiples of one week, up to four weeks per year. Leave may be taken up to the child's fifth birthday.</p>	<p>Individual right There are no limits to the number of periods of leave that can be taken until the child is three years, with no minimum period.</p>

**UK Sources:** *Direct.gov.uk* (2010b); Glaser *et al.* (2010)

**Spanish Sources:** Glaser *et al.* (2010); Escobedo (in Moss, 2009)

As can be seen from Table 3.6 the specific details of these policies are complex making any direct comparison between the two systems problematic. Although not necessarily indicative that a society values its children more, higher benefits may signal that family time is considered important. With this in mind I now move on to look at the availability of provision for more formal early childhood education and care.

### **3.5 Pre-compulsory Education and Care**

Since 1990 the impact of changes, instigated by new policies that have affected pre-compulsory education and care in both Spain and England, has been immense (Sevilla, 2000; Norman, 2009; Eurydice/EACEA, 2010a, 2010b & 2010c). These initiatives have been underpinned by societal recognition that this epoch of children's lives is a crucial time for children's physical, social, intellectual and emotional development (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004a; Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2009a) Confederación Española de Asociaciones de Madres y Padres (CEAPA), 2009a; Majó i Clavell, 2009).

Both countries have also drawn attention to the compensatory function of pre-compulsory education in reducing societal inequalities (CEAPA, 2009a; DCSF, 2009a; *Directgov*, 2010a). Additionally, the changing nature of families and the workforce has resulted in an increased demand for childcare (CEAPA, 2009a; Smith *et al.*, 2010). Acknowledging that pre-compulsory education complements, rather than replaces, family life, there have also been several initiatives to encourage parents to become involved in and/or to play an active role in this sphere of children's lives (*Ley Orgánica de Educación* (LOE), 2006a, Gobierno

de Espana/Ministerio de Educacion, 2010a; DfES, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; DCSF, 2008b).

## **England**

Whilst in government, New Labour prioritised early years education and childcare. In their comprehensive analysis of early childhood education in Britain since 1945 Brehony and Nawrotzki (2011) explore some of the rhetoric that underpinned this emphasis on early years policy in England. The 1998 National Childcare Strategy (Department for Education and Skills (DfEE, 1998) identified three needs: to raise the quality of care, to make childcare more affordable and more accessible. All four-year-olds were offered five two-and-a-half hour pre-school sessions from April 1999. In September 2000, the Foundation Stage of education (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)/Department for Education and Skills (DfEE) (2000)) was introduced. Following this, plans for free early education places (12.5 hours, 33 weeks a year) for all three-year-olds were announced and implemented in April 2004. This entitlement was extended to 15 hours, 38 weeks a year for all three- and four-year-olds in 2010. The Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO) assigned local authorities the duty of assessing the availability of childcare in their areas to make sure that there was provision for all working parents, or for those in training.

Although, according to the Labour Party website (2010), registered childcare places had increased to 1.3 million in 2007, child care costs remained high (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2007), was dominated by the private sector (Penn, 2007) and there was still a disparity between supply and demand especially at a local level (Daycare Trust, 2007). As

pointed out by Lloyd (2008), in relation to the UK, there appeared to be a contrast between early education and childcare, the former being viewed as a ‘public good’, and the latter as a ‘commodity to be purchased by parents’. In a ‘Next Steps’ report (DCSF, 2009a), reviewing the 2004 10-year Child Care Strategy, the importance of early learning was stressed to enable children to reach their full potential, to support the changing patterns of employment, to ensure parents can work and stay out of poverty, and to help families make choices.

Early years provision in England comprises a varied range of settings including private, voluntary and independent (PVI) provision, state-maintained nurseries, children’s centres and foundation stage units. A new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008b) was introduced in September 2008 replacing the former Foundation Stage (QCA/DfEE, 2000) and incorporating the previously separate Birth to Three Matters Framework (Sure Start Unit, 2002). All funded early years settings were required to follow the statutory framework set out in the EYFS curriculum for children from birth to five years (DCSF, 2008b).

As a result of a change in government in May 2010, the EYFS curriculum (DCSF, 2008b) was reviewed with an emphasis on four main areas: regulation; learning and development; assessment; and welfare (The Open University, 2010; Department for Education (DfE), 2011a, 2011b; Tickell, 2011a, 2011b). This revised EYFS framework (DfE, 2012; DfE/Early Education, 2012) was set to be implemented in September 2012.

## **Spain**

In 1990, under the *Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE)*, Spain integrated all its responsibilities for Early Childhood Education

and Care under education auspices. This change, that involved organising this stage of education into two cycles (0-3 years and 3-6 years), highlighted the educational character and independent phase of the *Educación infantil* (pre-primary stage) as opposed to its previous emphasis on children's welfare. Following this, in 2002, the *Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Educación (LOCE)* re-established the two cycles. This emphasised the welfare and education elements of the first cycle (0-3 years) (referring to this stage as *Educación Preescolar* (pre-school education)) whilst highlighting the importance of pupils' physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral development in the second cycle for children three to six years old (*Educación Infantil*). In May 2006 the *Ley Orgánica de Educación (LOE)* was passed which re-emphasised the two cycles as *Educación Infantil* (LOE, 2006a; 2006b), stressed their predominantly educational nature (Rivas, Sobrino and Perlata, 2010), and made early education a political priority.

Responsibility for this phase of education was given to the *Administraciones Educativas Autonómicas* (local education authorities). As a consequence, these autonomous governments regulated the curriculum. They set the minimum requirements for the settings; including ratios and practitioners' qualifications rather than being subject to national administration (Eurydice/EACEA, 2010b; 2010c). In turn, a new curriculum for three- to six-year-olds was put in place in Murcia for the school year 2008/2009 designed to 'directly impact the intellectual and moral development of children' (Región de Murcia/Consejería de Educación, Formación y Empleo, 2008).

Within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy (Lisbon European Council, 2000) Spain's Ministry of Education produced reports including *Objetivos Educativos y*

*Puntos de Referencia 2010* (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 2007, 2008) and (Gobierno de España/Ministerio de Educación, 2010b). One of their key points was to increase access to *Educación infantil*, with the aim of enabling students to achieve better educational results; especially those coming from lower socio-economic groups. As highlighted previously, *Plan Educa3* (Gobierno de España/Ministerio de Educación, 2007) was created to increase the number of *escuelas infantiles* for the *primer ciclo* of education for children aged nought to three years and to establish a network of *escuelas infantiles* that met the needs of working parents. The objectives of this initiative also included the creation of *escuelas infantiles* that focused on children's wellbeing and developed their potential for learning, and enhanced the participation of local authorities in the creation of these settings.

The demand for more provision for children under three is evident. As reported in the newspaper *20minutos* (2008b), in the capital of Murcia, out of 675 applications for places in public nurseries for children aged nought to three years, only 300 received places. This is resonant with the agenda of the Spanish national association of parents; *Confederación Española de Asociaciones de Madres y Padres* (CEAPA) (2009a). The proceedings of this conference highlighted an overall national shortage and uneven distribution of places. For example, based on 2009 figures, Murcia only had places available for 10% of 0-3 year olds whereas País Vasco and Aragón had places for over 50% of this age group (CEAPA, 2009b). The Association constructed a detailed report (CEAPA, 2009c) outlining several proposals aimed at increasing the availability of, and raising the quality of provision for children 0-3 years. These included the standardization of early years settings between autonomous regions in terms of the curriculum, ratios and

practitioners' training and qualifications. In particular, they called for the educational element of the phase 0-3 years to be recognised in addition to what they view as a current emphasis on children's welfare. They have also drawn attention to the importance of working closely with families, whilst also recognising that family structures are changing.

Hence the demand for more provision that is flexible in response to these changed structures that recognises the importance of educating children from birth and is not solely a childminding service. Thus, one criticism levelled against the Spanish *guarderías*; settings which mainly focus on the care of children from birth to three years, is their lack of emphasis on the social and educative value of attending a child care setting (CEAPA, 2009a).

At the same time, the Spanish parents' association CEAPA, (2009a) has expressed concern regarding the temptation to formalise pre-compulsory education by over emphasising its didactic nature. It also protested that children in the *segundo ciclo* (3-6 years) are situated in classes of up to 25 children. In relation to this, Valiente (2007) argues that, 'Spanish preschool is not child care' (p.2) and moves on to suggest that child care in Spain has been based upon an education rationale since the 1930s (Valiente, 2011). However, this trend has also restricted the use of preschools by working parents especially in relation to their shorter opening hours.



### 3.6 Number of children in early childhood education and care in England, Kent, Spain and Murcia

#### England

Based on Eurydice figures for 2010, in England 871, 560 children aged two- to four-years-old were in pre-primary education. Table 3.7 shows the number of children who attended educational provision in the maintained private, voluntary and independent sectors in England. Thus, according to these figures, some 95 per cent of the three- and four-year-old population in England benefit from some free early years education.

**Table 3.7: Number of three- and four-year-olds benefiting from early education places by type of provider in England 2008 – 2010**

	2008	2009	2010
<b>Private and voluntary providers*</b>			
Number of children benefiting from some free early education	413,100	421,500	437,000
Percentage of population	35	35	35
<b>Independent schools</b>			
Number of children benefiting from some free early education	36,400	36,300	35,100
Percentage of population	3	3	3
<b>Maintained nursery and primary schools</b>			
Number of children benefiting from some free early education	683,000	694,000	707,200
Percentage of population	27	27	26
<b>Nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools</b>			
Number of children benefiting from some free early education	321,300	322,600	328,700
Percentage of population	27	27	26
<b>Infant classes in primary schools</b>			
Number of children benefiting from some free early education	361,700	371,400	378,500
Percentage of population	30	31	30
<b>Special schools</b>			
Number of children benefiting from some free early education	3,800	3,700	3,800
Percentage of population	-	-	-
<b>All providers</b>			
Number of children benefiting from some free early education	1,136,300	1,155,500	1,183,100
Percentage of population	95	95	95

**Source:** Department for Education (DfE)/National Statistics (2010a)

\*Includes some Local Authority day nurseries registered to receive funding.

## Kent

As recorded by Ofsted (2008), Kent had a total of 2500 registered childcare providers making available 33,700 places for children 0-5 years. Table 3.8 illustrates the composition of these figures.

**Table 3.8: Number of registered childcare providers in Kent**

	<b>Childminders</b>	<b>Full Day Care</b>	<b>Sessional Day Care</b>	<b>Crèche Day Care</b>	<b>All providers</b>
<b>Number of providers</b>	1,700	400	300	40	2,500
<b>Number of places available</b>	7,200	17,900	7,700	900	33,700

**Source:** Ofsted (2008)

## Spain

According to Eurydice (2009), the percentage of children under three-years-old enrolled in pre-primary education in Spain for 2008/2009 was 26.2% and 98.7% of children from three to five years of age. Table 3.9 shows how many pupils are enrolled in public and private early years settings, and the distribution across the *primer and segundo ciclos*. As can be seen from this table, for the period 2008 – 2009, there were more children in private *primer ciclo* settings than in public ones. However, from 2009 – 2010 this balance had changed in favour of the public *primer ciclo escuelas infantiles*. In turn, the number of children enrolled in *primer and segundo ciclo* settings increased between 2008/2009 and 2009/2010.

**Table 3.9: Number of pupils enrolled in public and private *escuelas infantiles* (*Primer ciclo*\* and *Segundo ciclo*) in Spain (2008-2010)**

	<b>2008-2009 Primer Ciclo (0-3 years)</b>	<b>Segundo Ciclo (3-6 years)</b>	<b>2009-2010 Primer Ciclo (0-3 years)</b>	<b>Segundo Ciclo (3-6 years)</b>
<b>Escuelas Infantiles (Total)</b>	361,826	1,401,193	401,582	1,420,560
<b>Escuelas Infantiles (Public)</b>	174,629	954,684	203,647	971,157
<b>Escuelas Infantiles (Private)</b>	187,197	446,509	197,935	449,509

\*Pupils enrolled in school authorised by education authorities.

**Source:** Oficina de Estadística/Ministerio de Educación (2010a)

### **Murcia**

According to data from the Spanish Ministry of Education (Oficina de Estadística/Ministerio de Educación, 2010b), in Murcia 15.3% of all children aged nought to three years attended an *escuela infantil* (*primer ciclo*) and 97% of all children aged three to five years attended an *escuela infantil* (*segundo ciclo*). These figures indicated a rise, in *primer ciclo* attendance, from 2009 when the percentage was estimated to be 10%. Table 3.10 shows the number of *primer* and *segundo ciclo escuelas infantiles* in Murcia, and the number of pupils who were enrolled in them.

**Table 3.10: Number of public and private *Escuelas infantiles* in Region de Murcia, and number of pupils enrolled in them (2009-2010)**

	<b>Number of centres</b>	<b>Number of pupils enrolled</b>
<b>Escuelas Infantiles (Total)</b>	658	61,768
<b>Escuelas Infantiles (Public)</b>	459	42,168
<b>Escuelas Infantiles (Private)</b>	199	19,600

**Source:** Oficina de Estadística/Ministerio de Educación (2010b)

### 3.7 Informal Childcare

Despite the apparent increase of provision in Murcia for children under three, there still appears to be a shortfall of childcare places particularly for this age group. Therefore, it is not surprising that the figures available for children in pre-compulsory education and care, in both countries, fail to take into account the contribution made by informal sources of childcare such as grandparents. For example, Glaser *et al.* (2010) estimated that around one in three mothers in the UK in paid work receives help with childcare from grandparents, and in Spain 40 per cent of grandparents provide regular childcare for their grandchildren. However, other sources (Mediavilla, 2007; Saga/Populus, 2008) indicate that these figures may be even higher.

At the time of writing this chapter, Spain offered no entitlements for grandparents providing care for their grandchildren, whereas the United Kingdom formally recognised this role by introducing National Insurance Credits for grandparents from April 2011 (Glaser *et al.*, 2010; *Directgov*, 2011). Nevertheless, there have been calls in the UK to take this further by recognising the important role that many grandparents undertake by looking after their grandchildren (Haurant, 2009; Wellard and Wheatley, 2010). Spanish grandparents were urged to join in Spain's *Unión General de Trabajadores España* (UGT) strike in September 2010 to demonstrate how much they support the economy (Cervilla, 2010). However, as with my previous comment about parents' affective reasons (see p. 72) for choosing to look after children, there may be some grandparents that look after their grandchildren for motives other than out of necessity (Roussel, 1995; Brandis, 2003). Alternatively, parents may regard childcare

undertaken by grandparents as the best substitute for parental care (Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

Based on the existing data ranging from 2007 to 2010, in both countries over 95% of children aged three to five years were receiving some form of government-funded education and care. Nevertheless, although there was some availability of means-tested provision, there was little free entitlement to early years education and care for children under the age of three in either Spain or the UK. The availability of this provision varied throughout the two countries, and was largely supplemented by a broad range of privately-run providers, whose services could be costly (Bradshaw, 2006; Björnberg, 2006). Childcare was also reliant on a body of informal providers such as grandparents. In the case of Spain, Valiente (2007) suggested that one of the barriers to expanding childcare for working parents is a widespread assumption that mother-care is central for small children. Nevertheless, expanding childcare also requires financial investment. Consequently, before moving on to look at the statutory phase of early education I provide some information pertinent to the amount of money that the two countries allocate to the education of young children in the pre-primary and primary stages.

### **3.8 Spending on education**

Statistics on educational expenditure in the United Kingdom and Spain differ in the manner they are recorded and reported, and also the year in which they have been collected.

However, according to figures from Eurydice/EACEA (2010a) and DCSF (2009b) from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009, the total expenditure by central and local government in the UK was estimated to be £79.9 billion (£52.2 billion local

authority expenditure and £27.7 billion central government expenditure). This represented 6.1 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Of this expenditure, £4.7 billion was spent on under-fives, and £22.4 billion on primary education (children five years – 11 years). With regard to Spain, based on figures from 2007 (Eurydice/EACEA, 2010b) public expenditure on education was EUROS 46,452,604.0 which represented 4.4% of Spain's gross domestic product (GDP). Some EUROS 13,504,565.3 was allotted to pre-primary and primary education (three years to 12 years) which was equivalent to 29.1% of the total public expenditure on education.

Taking these available figures as a guide it is indicative that the United Kingdom assigns a higher percentage of its GDP to the pre-primary and primary phase of education than Spain does. I now move on to look at this next phase of schooling that signals a transition from pre-compulsory to statutory education.

### **3.9 Statutory age for starting school**

The statutory age for starting compulsory education in England is the term following a child's fifth birthday. In Spain children are not legally obliged to start school until they are six years old. In theory this denotes a longer pre-school phase for Spanish children, than their English counterparts. Nevertheless, in practice this may not be quite so straightforward. For example, according to figures for 2006 (EACEA, 2009) over 90% of four-year-olds in the United Kingdom and Spain were enrolled in education settings. In England, the lower age of five years old (and for many children four years old) for starting primary school, in comparison with other European countries, is often an area of contention and debate (Alexander, 2009; Hofkins and Northern, 2009).

To illustrate some of the disadvantages with starting school at this early age the UK's practice has been frequently compared with other countries' educational systems that have a later school starting age. Academic writers such as Screech (2009), drawing on Bertram and Pascal's 2002 international comparison of early years education curricula, have contrasted early years provision in England with that of New Zealand, *Spain*, Sweden and Switzerland. They suggest that these countries, '...place no focus at all on academic learning in their early years provision but choose instead to prioritize children's social and emotional capacities and learning dispositions' (p.75). Although Spanish law demands that children are not required to start school until the age of six, this may not be fully representative of what is happening in practice (Coughlan, 2008; British Council/Gobierno de Espana (Ministry of Education), 2011).

Consequently, whilst there is some disagreement in relation to an optimal age for starting compulsory education, it does appear that there may be some inconsistency between the legal age of starting school, the actual age that children are commencing their formal education (albeit compulsory) and their particular experiences whilst at school. This highlights a need to look beyond written sources, such as curricular documents, before making assumptions about respective education systems, as these may provide us with only a partial view of what is happening in practice.

However, as emphasised in the next section, it is not only the statutory education frameworks that impinge on the lives of children and young people with regard to their chronological age. Outside of the education system children are constrained by the countries' respective legal frameworks.

### **3.10 Legal Frameworks**

In the previous chapter my review of media-based documentation suggested that children may not always be welcomed into some public places. Alongside this seemingly arbitrary reception of children, the place of children in intergenerational spaces and their participation in certain activities is somehow dictated by the law. Within a booklet published by the Family and Parenting Institute (2007) it is proposed that laws reflect the attitudes and beliefs of their respective societies. Taking this assertion into consideration, I now look at some of the rules and regulations pertinent to the UK and Spain that may impact on children's treatment and presence in public spaces. I also highlight two significant differences between the legal frameworks of England and Spain; the age of criminal responsibility and the ban on smacking.

As can be seen from Table 3.11, England and Spain agree on some ages when children and young people become competent to participate in certain types of behaviours. Changes encompassed within the United Nations' and European Union (EU) initiatives, such as The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), WHO (World Health Organization) (2000) and various European Commission Directives (Eur-Lex, 2010; European Commission, 2010b) have impacted on the two countries' legal frameworks. These have contributed to the reduction of some disparities between the two countries' legal minimum ages, and their subsequent provision for children. As highlighted in Table 3.11 some anomalies still remain between the legal frameworks of Spain and England.



**Table 3.11: Legal minimum ages Spain and England**

	<b>Spain</b>	<b>England</b>
Driving age	18	17
Smoking age	18	18
Voting age	18	18
Candidacy age (Eligibility to stand)	18	21
Minimum age of marriage	14	16
Marriage age (without consent)	18	18
Minimum age of employment	16 (permission from parents or guardians required up to 18 years of age)	16
Mandatory school starting age	6	5
School leaving age	16 (in process of being changed to 18)	16 (in process of being changed to 18)
Minimum age of criminal responsibility	16	10
Age of consent: Male-female sex Male-male sex Female-female sex	13	16
Age of majority*	18	18
Age when fireworks can be purchased	12-18 (Category 2 fireworks can be sold to 16 year olds, Category 3 to 18 year olds) (Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE), 2010a)	16 – 18 (Category 1 fireworks can be sold to 16 year olds i.e. party poppers, indoor fireworks) (Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), 2010; Directgov, 2010c)
Age when a pet can be purchased	No information available	16 (Animal Welfare Act 2006) Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

**Sources:** Family and Parenting Institute (2007; 2011f; Eur-Lex, 2010)

**\*UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (British Embassy, Madrid)**

It is becoming acceptable practice in Britain for youngsters, with their parents consent, to celebrate the end of their Secondary school education by taking a short holiday break overseas with their friends, unencumbered by the presence of an adult. This is seen by many as a right of passage for 16-18 year olds. Parents and guardians should be aware however that the age of majority in Spain is 18 and that Spanish law requires minors to be supervised by a responsible adult. Unaccompanied minors who for whatever reason come to the attention of the Spanish authorities, may be taken into residential care by the Spanish Social Services, until they can be released into the custody of a responsible adult.

Nevertheless, where the countries appear to have matching legal ages, on closer examination, further specificities may become evident. As can be seen in Table 3.12 there are no apparent differences between Spain and England in relation to the age when alcohol can legally be purchased and consumed. However, there are differences in the clauses attached to these ages with regard to if children are accompanied by adults or if food is served on the premises.

**Table 3.12: Consumption and Purchase of Alcohol Spain and England**

	<b>Spain*</b>	<b>England**</b>
Consumption of alcohol (without food)	16 – 18	18
Purchase of alcohol (Off-Premise):		
Beer	16-18	18
Wine	16-18	18
Spirits	16-18	18
Purchase of alcohol (On-Premise):		
Beer	16-18	18
Wine	16-18	18
Spirits	16-18	18

**Sources:** Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo (2010); Directgov (2010d).

\* The legal age to consume and purchase alcohol in Spain has been recently changed to 18 with the exception of Asturias (Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad (MSSSI), 2011).

\*\*Previously in England, the consumption of alcohol by minors was only unlawful in the ‘bar area’ of licensed premises. An adult could therefore have bought a gin and tonic at the bar and given it to a child as young as five years in the beer garden or night club. This is no longer the case. All parts of a licensed premise will be subject to the same prohibitions. It is unlawful to allow any unaccompanied child to be present on authorised premises which are exclusively or primarily used for supply and consumption of alcohol on the premises. Persons aged 16 and over can drink beer, cider, or wine to be consumed at a table meal if accompanied by an over-18 (however, the over-18 must buy the alcohol in any circumstance). Chocolate liqueurs may be bought by those 16 and over. Alcohol may be given by parents to children aged 5 or over in a private home.

In the previous chapter, a frequently occurring theme was England’s somewhat negative attitude to children in public spaces such as pubs, bars and restaurants (even when they are not purchasing or consuming alcohol). Consequently, it is significant that children’s mere presence in these spaces is controlled by the Licensing Act 2003 (Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) 2009; Ward, 2009). In turn, the protection of children from harm is one of the four licensing objectives that underpin this Act. This is summarised as follows:

The licensing regime was designed in part, to close the loopholes and inadequacies of previous law in relation to children, while allowing under 18s to experience the atmosphere of licensed premises in a family friendly, safe environment. The Act requires that all licensed premises and clubs set out in their operating schedule the steps they propose to take to promote the licensing objectives, including the protection of children from harm.

(DCMS, 2009)

Additionally, licensing authorities can attach conditions in relation to children's access to reflect the individual nature of establishments if 'this is necessary to protect children from harm' to enable the provision of the 'fullest possible safeguards for the protection of children' (DCMS, 2009). Thus, the protection of children is at the centre of this new Act.

Contrary to somewhat popular perceptions that children can go everywhere with adults in Spain, a law prohibiting smoking in certain establishments, introduced in December 2005, commonly referred to as *La ley antitabaco* (the anti-tobacco law), has forced public spaces such as bars, restaurants and hotels to review their policy for admitting children. Although this law resulted in a total smoking ban in most public and private spaces there were some exceptions. Thus, any bars that permitted smoking, or provided special zones within public spaces designated as smoking areas are out of bounds to any person younger than sixteen years even if accompanied by an adult. Consequently, since January 2006, many bars and restaurants have displayed notices prohibiting the admittance of any person below the age of eighteen. This practice is defended on the grounds of protecting children from the harmful effects of tobacco. Additionally, autonomous regions have brought in subsequent rulings, arising from *La Ley 28/2005, de 26 diciembre* (and *La Ley 42/2010, de 30 diciembre*) (BOE, 2005; 2010b) particular

to their localities, which specify the type of signs that need to be displayed to communicate this prohibition and also the related sanctions that are imposed for failure to comply with these laws.

However, where a legal age is specified this may not necessarily dictate what is happening in practice. For example, whilst undertaking my fieldwork in Murcian public spaces, I observed children in some bars and restaurants that permitted smoking. It would also be interesting to investigate if the total ban on smoking in public places in Spain, on January 2nd 2011 (Serrano, 2010), has resulted in children being readmitted into the previously designated 'adult-only' smoking environments.

Furthermore, in the absence of specific legal requirements being in place, there may be occasions when parents/carers may have to make a judgement when deciding when children are old enough, or competent, to participate in certain types of behaviours. For example, in the United Kingdom no age is specified when it is permissible to leave children alone in the home (Family and Parenting Institute, 2007, 2011f; Directgov, 2010e). The government says each child has a different level of maturity and responsibility (BBC News, 2008g), but the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (2010a) and The Children's Legal Centre (CLC) (2010) recommend 16 years as a guide age (particularly overnight).

Nevertheless, several high profile cases of child abandonment, mostly when children have been left alone when parents/carers have gone on holiday, have reached the courts (Clout, 2008). In relation to this, The CLC (BBC News, 2008d) warned parents that they could face prosecution for leaving children home alone during school holidays. Several cases of child abandonment have also been

reported in the Spanish media (Barroso, 2010; Caravaca, 2009). In particular, one source (Que.es, 2010) highlighted that 24 children had been found abandoned in Spain (by their parents) during the period 2009-2010. This links to the note about the age of majority in Spain that supports the information in Table 3.11 in that Spanish law requires minors to be supervised by a responsible adult.

With regard to the sale and use of adult fireworks (see Table 3.11) both England and Spain have detailed legal documents that cover these issues (BIS, 2010; BOE, 2010a). In particular there was some public resistance in Spain to European Law (Directive 2007/23/EC), which impacted on the age at which minors under the age of 18 could purchase and make use of fireworks, because it was thought that this would endanger some of their traditions and fiestas. As a result, some Spanish local governments, made special concessions for the use of some categories of firework at certain fiestas (Girba, 2007) for 12 – 18 years olds; in some cases this involved children receiving training beforehand (Fernandez, 2010). Actions such as these highlight the balance between risk and safety, when it may impact on freedom and/or enjoyment, and protecting children (and others) from possible harm and the question of competence and responsibility.

As aforementioned, two prominent legal differences between England and Spain are their respective age of criminal responsibility and their use of corporal punishment. England's lower age of criminal responsibility (see Table 3.11), as pointed out by authors such as Lewis (2006), has been a reaction to moral panics '...about both the threat posed by a-social and criminal behaviour on the part of children...' (p.3). Children's apparently deteriorating behaviour has been blamed on a myriad of factors including a decline in family values (Lewis, 2006) and 'the lack of proper socialisation of children' (Murray in Lewis, 2006, p.3). In

December 2007 smacking was banned in Spain (Reuters Madrid, 2007) enabling them to join 18 of the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2008) that had already banned smacking at school and in the home. However, reaction (*El País*, 2006) to this ban suggests that this move may not be fully supported by the Spanish public.

The UK is one of five countries holding out against an all-out ban on slapping. It has been criticised on multiple occasions for contravening Article 19 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. (Children are Unbeatable, 2010; The Children's Society, 2010). Despite being under pressure to change the law (de Boer-Buquicchio, 2010), the British Government has rejected the banning of corporal punishment in the home as long as parents do not leave bruises, grazes or swelling. In turn, this appears to be a particular area where UK governments have been reluctant to interfere in the private arena of the family (Lister, 2006).

With the exception of the UK's refusal to introduce a smacking ban and England and Wales' younger age of criminal responsibility, many of the laws that impact on children's lives are reportedly linked to concerns about safeguarding them, especially in relation to their health and safety. In this next section I put these issues under further scrutiny to consider if the different emphases on the underpinning legal frameworks are apparent in the data related to children's health and safety in the two countries.

### **3.11 Health and safety**

The concept of childhood risk was a recurring theme in the previous chapter. Some authors have also emphasised how this fear, both real and perceived, may be negatively impacting on children's freedom (Madge and Barker, 2007; Gill,

2007a; Guldberg, 2009). However, the degree to which children are regarded as competent in appreciating and negotiating risks may also define the activities they are permitted to engage in. Writing on this topic, primarily for an audience of UK expatriate parents bringing children up in Spain, Grenham (2010) proposes that:

[In Spain] [a]ttitude to childhood risk is very different [to the UK]. It may be noticeable at a local fiesta when you find yourself running through streets with your kids dodging fireworks and flames along with other parents, or the ease at which children are allowed to play unsupervised in the street or pop along unaccompanied to the local shop.

To question impressionistic views such as the above, I collected data with the aim of presenting further evidence in relation to how healthy and safe it was to be a child in the UK, and in Spain. This task was hindered by the availability of data in relation to child injury, safety standards and health issues, and also in the differences in how data were collected and reported upon by the UK and Spain (also see Audit Commission/Healthcare Commission, 2007).

In turn, socio-demographic determinants may also underpin country specific data (European Child Safety Alliance/Eurosafe, 2009a; 2009b). Bearing in mind that such factors may impact on the accuracy of these figures, Table 3.13 gives a breakdown of the amount and type of deaths by injury for children aged 0 – 4 years in the two countries based on figures for 2005.

**Table 3.13: Number of (N) and age specific rates (rate) of deaths by injury per 100,000 population for children 0-4 years in England and Wales and Spain for 2005**

Causes of death	Sex	England and Wales		Spain	
		< 1 year (N) (rate)	1-4 years (N) (rate)	<1 year (N) (rate)	1-4 years (N) (rate)
<b>Accidents and adverse effects</b>	<b>M</b>	19 (5.7)	39 (3.2)	22 (9.2)	49 (5.5)
	<b>F</b>	20 (6.3)	22 (1.9)	9 (4.0)	38 (4.5)
<b>Motor vehicle traffic accidents</b>	<b>M</b>	0 (0.0)	8 (0.6)	7 (2.9)	9 (1.0)
	<b>F</b>	2 (0.6)	7 (0.6)	2 (0.9)	13 (1.5)
<b>Other transport accidents</b>	<b>M</b>	0 (0.0)	4 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)
	<b>F</b>	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)
<b>Accidental poisoning</b>	<b>M</b>	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)
	<b>F</b>	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
<b>Accidental falls</b>	<b>M</b>	1 (0.3)	4 (0.3)	3 (1.2)	3 (0.3)
	<b>F</b>	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	3 (0.4)
<b>Accidents caused by fire and flames</b>	<b>M</b>	0 (0.0)	6 (0.5)	1 (0.4)	7 (0.8)
	<b>F</b>	0 (0.0)	5 (0.4)	1 (1.3)	2 (0.2)
<b>Accidental drowning and submersion</b>	<b>M</b>	1 (0.3)	10 (0.8)	1 (0.4)	16 (1.8)
	<b>F</b>	1 (0.3)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	7 (0.8)
<b>All other accidents including late effects</b>	<b>M</b>	14 (4.2)	7 (0.6)	9 (3.7)	11 (1.2)
	<b>F</b>	15 (4.8)	6 (0.5)	4 (1.8)	12 (1.4)
<b>Drugs, medicaments causing adverse effects in therapeutic use</b>	<b>M</b>	3 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.1)
	<b>F</b>	2 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
<b>Homicide and injury purposely inflicted by other persons</b>	<b>M</b>	2 (0.6)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.1)
	<b>F</b>	1 (0.3)	2 (0.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
<b>Other external causes</b>	<b>M</b>	11 (3.3)	10 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	<b>F</b>	11 (3.3)	7 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)
<b>Demographic data (N) (Total population by age and sex)</b>	<b>M</b>	327024	1236942	234489	898694
	<b>F</b>	311914	1178131	220433	849095

**Source:** World Health Organization (WHO) (2010)

As emphasised by the European Child Safety Alliance/Eurosafe, (2009a; 2009b), “deaths are just the tip of the ‘injury iceberg’” (p.1). With this in mind, I now move on to look at figures that give some indication of reported unintended accidents (other than transport accidents) for children under five years old. As can be seen in Table 3.14, based on the available data, it would appear that Spain has records of more home and leisure accidents than the UK (see Table 3.15) in most categories. However, different methods used for defining, categorising and recording these accidents by the two countries may impact on the accuracy of these figures.



For example, the UK figures are based upon statistics for accidents that have happened in the home and at leisure where the victim has sought treatment at a hospital (Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), 2003). Alternatively, the Spanish figures have been extrapolated to the wider population from a sample of 7,500 home and leisure accidents collected from 64,394 households by the Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo and Instituto Nacional del Consumo (INC) (2008). Therefore they need to be read with caution, and further analysis may be needed to determine the validity of these figures for comparative purposes.

**Table 3.14: Percentage and number of Home and Leisure Accidents for children aged 0-4 years in Spain for 2007**

	Percentage of all accidents for children < 1 year	Estimated no. of individual accidents for children < 1 year	Percentage of all accidents for children 1-4 years	Estimated no. of individual accidents for children 1-4 years	Total estimated no. of individual accidents for children 0-4 years	Estimated percentage of total estimated population (2,237,522) 0-4 years (2007)
<b>Type of accident:</b>						
<b>Falls</b>	76.9%	11,512	53.4%	29,853	41,365	1.8%
<b>Strikes, collisions</b>	7.7%	1152	14.8%	8274	8426	0.4%
<b>Crushings, Cuts Piercings (Total)</b>	7.7%	1152	10.0%	5590	6742	0.3%
<b>Foreign body in natural orifice</b>	7.7%	1152	4.1%	2292	3444	0.15%
<b>Asphyxiation</b>			3.1%	1733	1733	0.07%
<b>Poisoning:</b> Chemical effect			5.9%	3689	3689	0.16%
<b>Poisoning:</b> Thermal effect			6.6%	3354	3354	0.14%
<b>Electric shock/radiation</b>			1.0%	559	559	0.02%
<b>Exhaustion</b>			1.0%	559	559	0.02%
<b>Total Accidents</b>	100%	14,968	100%	55,847	70, 815	3.2%

**Source:** Adapted from 2007 figures from Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo and Instituto Nacional del Consumo (INC) Madrid (2008)

**Table 3.15: Home and Leisure Accidents for children aged (0-4 years) in the United Kingdom for 2002\***

	Percentage of all accidents for children 0-4 years	No. of individual accidents for children 0-4 years	Estimated percentage of total estimated population (3,414,000) 0-4 years (2002)
<b>Type of accident:</b>			
<b>Falls</b>	49%	14,888	<b>0.43%</b>
<b>Strikes</b>	18%	5,498	0.16%
<b>Pinches, Crushes, Piercings</b>	9.5%	2,861	0.08%
<b>Foreign body</b>	6.6%	1986	0.05%
<b>Suffocation</b>		161	0.004%
<b>Poisoning: Suspected</b>	4.2%	1,277	0.04%
<b>Poisoning: Chemical effect</b>	0.7%	209	0.006%
<b>Poisoning: Thermal effect</b>	4.5%	1,355	0.04%
<b>Electric/radiation</b>	0.11%	33	0.0009%
<b>Acute overexertion</b>	2.6%	775	0.02%
<b>Other</b>	3.5%	1,056	0.03%
<b>Total accidents</b>	(99%) 100%	30,099	0.88%

**Source:** Adapted from 2002\* figures from Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) (2003) and Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2010a).

\*On 23 May 2003 UK government ministers announced that the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) (2003) (Ward and Healy, 2008) would no longer fund the collection and publication of Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System (HASS) data. Therefore, the latest data available for the UK is from 2002.

To become better informed about how safety conscious countries were towards their children and adolescents, a report by the European Child Safety Alliance and Eurosafe (Mackay and Vincenten, 2009), assessed the level of child and adolescent safety in 24 European countries. This was undertaken by examining and grading the level of adoption, implementation and enforcement of evidenced based national policies in nine areas of safety relevant to children and adolescents, and three looking at strategies to support child safety efforts (p.4). According to this report, England had an above average child safety grade of *good*, whereas Spain only scored a *fair* rating which was compatible with the Child Safety Accident Project (CSAP) overall average European country score. As can be seen in Table 3.16 England was rated fourth highest in terms of its safety level out of the 24 countries and Spain was slightly behind in sixth place.

**Table 3.16: England and Spain: 12 issue area scores (each out of 5 stars); overall safety performance score, and ranking out of 24 countries (July 2008)**

Safety Indicator	England	Spain
Moped/motor scooter safety	4	5
Passenger safety	3.5	3.5
Pedestrian safety	4	1.5
Cycling safety	4	2
Water safety/drowning prevention	1.5	2
Fall prevention	3	0.5
Poisoning Prevention	2.5	4.5
Burn/scald prevention	2.5	2
Choking/strangulation prevention	2.5	1.5
Child safety leadership	4	1.5
Child safety infrastructure	3.5	2
Child safety capacity	4.5	3
Overall score	39.5	29
Overall ranking (out of 24 countries)	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Mackay and Vincenten (2009)

### 3.12 Care of children

Consequently, countries can be seen as putting in place different levels of safety structures, both nationally and locally, which may reflect upon how they regard the importance of keeping children safe from harm by preventing accidents. Both countries have organisations that promote ongoing safety campaigns aimed at reducing the amount of accidents in childhood (Fundación MAPFRE, 2010; Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) (2010); Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) (2010)).

Nevertheless, there are a variety of factors that may increase or decrease children's likelihood of sustaining an injury. These include age, gender, social class, environment and behaviour (Audit Commission/Healthcare Commission, 2007). For example, according to this report and a subsequent one by Siegler, Al-Hamad, Blane, (2010) it was noted that children brought up in economically

disadvantaged environments tended to be most at risk of experiencing an accidental (or violent death).

In England, parents in a manual occupation and those who cannot be classified by occupation (i.e. the long-term unemployed and those who have never had a job) are around 17 times more likely to lose an infant under one year old in a fatal accident than parents in high managerial and professional jobs. In particular, the widest differences between the children of parents in professional and managerial jobs and those parents in manual occupations were in deaths caused by fires and pedestrian accidents, followed by accidental suffocation (Siegler, Al-Hamad, Blane, 2010). Time and place have also been found to be contributory factors to childhood accidents.

According to a Spanish study undertaken by Fundación MAPFRE and Sociedad Española de Medicina de Familia y Comunitaria (SEMFYC) (2010) most childhood accidents occurred in the home and peaked at weekends, and during holiday periods in July and August, and December. Therefore, although the available countrywide statistics indicate that Spain may have a higher average childhood accident rate than England, and a poorer rating for putting in place measures to make the environment safer for children; these may not fully reflect the underpinning socio-demographic factors.

As aforementioned, there have been several examples where the United Kingdom has been criticised for being overly safety conscious and the resulting impact of this on children's freedom (Madge and Barker, 2007; Gill 2007a; Guldberg, 2009). Consequently, whilst it would be wrong to support initiatives that may put children's lives at risk, perhaps Spain's more relaxed attitude to risk aversion is one of its traits that outsiders may support or admire (as portrayed in

the example from Grenham on p.102). However, one of the consequences of this laid-back approach appears to be a higher rate of childhood accidents.

I now move on to look at the prevalence of non-accidental injuries and deaths, and at some of the measures Spain and England put in place to safeguard and protect children from both the actual and potential consequences of these incidences.

### **3.13 Children in care**

According to the Department for Education (DfE)/National Statistics (2010b), for the year ending 31 March 2010 there were 64,400 looked after children in England (10,900 aged under five years old). Seventy three per cent of these children were in a foster placement with approximately 13 per cent placed in residential children's homes. In comparison, the number of children in Spain, 14,000 (10,000 under the age of six years) living in residential children's homes '*centros de acogida*' is one of the highest in Europe (Eurochild, 2010). Regarding this, a Spanish media source highlighted the government's intention to reduce this figure, and in doing so drew attention to the UK as being one of the European countries that had managed to reduce the number of children in municipal residential care homes, by placing children with families (*Que.es*, 2010).

Thus, at the time of writing this chapter it is apparent that the Spanish model of caring for children at risk has resulted in more children living in council-run, municipal residential homes as opposed to being placed in family homes as in England and the United Kingdom.

### 3.14 Childhood homicides

UNICEF (2001) suggested that childhood deaths are one of the indicators of how a society meets the needs of its children. Nevertheless, there is a certain amount of scepticism with regard to the quality of available data on child maltreatment deaths and their respective reliability (UNICEF, 2003). However, according to a UNICEF (2003) report Spain is one of five countries that appear to have an extremely low incidence of child maltreatment deaths (fewer than 0.2 maltreatment deaths for every 100,000 children). Table 3.17 compares child maltreatment deaths in Spain with those of the United Kingdom as evidenced in this report.

**Table 3.17: Child maltreatment deaths in Spain and the United Kingdom**

	Annual number of maltreatment deaths among children under the age of 15 years per 100,000 children, averaged over a five year period during the 1990s	Annual number of maltreatment deaths combined with those classified as 'of undetermined intent' among children under the age of 15 years per 100,000 children, averaged over a five year period during the 1990s	Total number of maltreatment deaths among children under one year. The totals are for a five year period and include deaths that have been classified as 'of undetermined intent'	Total number of maltreatment deaths among children under the age of 15. The totals are for a five year period and include deaths that have been classified as 'of undetermined intent'
<b>Spain</b>	0.1	0.1	9	44
<b>UK</b>	0.4	0.9	143	502

**Source:** UNICEF (2003)

In the United Kingdom, according to a report by Coleman, *et al.*, (2007), and based on figures for 2005-2006, the age group most at risk of homicide were children under one year old, at 38 per million of the total population. This risk

decreased to 5 per million of the population for 1 to 4 year olds. Thus, a total of 35 children, under the age of five, lost their lives as a result of homicide in the period 2005-2006. As evidenced in this and other reports, the majority of these children were killed by one of their own parents or carers rather than being the victims of strangers (UNICEF, 2003; NSPCC, 2007; Coleman *et al.* 2007; Pritchard and Williams, 2010).

To compare ‘child abuse-related deaths’ in England and Wales with other major developed countries, one of which was Spain, and to investigate if these had decreased over the period 1974-2006, Pritchard and Williams (2010) looked at ‘child abuse-related deaths’ in comparison to ‘All causes of death’. They concluded that both types of death had decreased in England and Wales, and in Spain between 1976 and 2006. However, this study also indicated a lower baby and child homicide rate for Spain standing at 4 per million for the period 2004-2006. Therefore, whilst recognising the limitations that the available data present, it is indicative that Spain has a lower child homicide rate than the United Kingdom (including England and Wales).

### **3.15 Child Abuse**

The United Kingdom has many high profile organizations (i.e. Barnardo’s, 2010; National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), 2010a) that campaign against the maltreatment of children. In turn, the NSPCC (2010a) advises that child abuse and neglect are both under-reported and under-registered. However, based upon statistics from 2010, of children and young people, who were the subjects of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) it was indicative that 39,100 of them had suffered abuse. As can be seen in Table 3.18 the types of, and recorded

incidents, of abuse were recorded by the NSPCC (2010b) under the categories of neglect, physical, sexual, emotional and multiple types of abuse and Table 3.17 shows that a total of 16,700 children aged 0-4 years were the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) and Table 3.19 gives a breakdown of the figures by gender.

**Table 3.18: Children in England who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) by category of abuse (2010)**

Category of abuse	Number of children
Neglect	17,200
Physical abuse	4,700
Sexual abuse	2,200
Emotional abuse	11,400
Multiple	3,400
Total	39,100

**Source:** NSPCC (2010b)

**Table 3.19: Children in England\* aged 0-4 years who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) by gender (2010)**

	Boys	Girls	Total
Children Under 1	2,300	2,100	4,400
Children 1 – 4	6,400	5,900	12,300
Total	8,700	8,000	16,700

**Sources:** NSPCC (2010b); Department for Education (DfE) (2010)

\*No data published for Kent due to serious data quality concerns (p.17).

With regard to cruelty to children in Spain, Hooper (2006) proposes that this is a good deal more common than is generally believed from a ‘rose-tinted picture of Spanish family life’ perspective. In the same vein he dismisses the view that the Spanish and other Latin nations do not have organizations for the protection of children because they do not need them as ‘simply bunk’ and equates this perception with a taboo of interfering in family affairs (p.138). My search for organizations in Spain for the protection of children in Spain revealed several associations such as *Federación de Asociaciones para la Prevención del Maltrato Infantil (FAPMI)* (2010a) (founded June 1990) and *Fundación Vicki Bernadet* (2010) (formerly called FADA and founded in 1997). A campaign, financed by



the *Ministerio de Sanidad* (Spanish Ministry of Health), to encourage members of the public to report suspected cases of child abuse was also discovered (Negre, 2010; FAPMI, 2010b).

However, as can be noted the Spanish organizations identified appeared to have been established more recently than the named ones in the United Kingdom such as the NSPCC (founded 1884) and Barnardo's (founded 1867 when Thomas Barnardo founded his first Ragged School). This may be indicative of a relatively recent recognition of child abuse incidents in Spain; an issue that may have previously been less publicly acknowledged.

Comments in reports such as '*La Infancia en cifras*' (Instituto de Infancia y Mundo Urbano) (CIIMU), 2006, p.152) and '*Boletín Estadístico 09*' (Dirección General de las Familias y la Infancia) (2007) with regard to the availability and accuracy of national statistics for child abuse '*maltrato infantil*' in Spain support my own personal difficulty in obtaining consistent and reliable data on this topic. Consequently, the figures in Table 3.20 are taken from a report from 1997/1998 as this included both national and regional statistics in relation to four categories of child abuse. Therefore, it is impossible to make any specific comparisons on child abuse figures between England and Spain, or Kent and Murcia. However, it is evident that all four categories of child abuse are present at both a national and regional level in both England and Spain, and it is noticeable that significant numbers of children under five are apparent victims of abuse.

**Table 3.20: Children in Spain who were victims of child abuse 1997-1998**

Category of abuse	Spain: No. of children	Prevalence per 10,000	Murcia: No of children	Prevalence per 10,000
Neglect	9,629	6.19	450	8.75
Physical abuse	2,220	1.43	124	2.41
Emotional abuse	3,944	2.53	156	3.03
Sexual abuse	396	0.25	11	0.21
Total	16,189	10.4	741	14.4

**Source:** Instituto de Infancia y Mundo Urbano (CIIMU) (2006)

### **Child sexual abuse**

Child sexual abuse, commonly referred to as paedophilia, which is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘sexual desire directed at children’ has been blamed for restricting children’s freedom and movement in both physical and cyber worlds, creating barriers between the generations and sometimes being associated with the term ‘stranger danger’.

Paedophilia incidents are a cause for concern in both Spain and England. This anxiety has been highlighted in media sources in both countries which have focused upon several high profile cases (see Chapter 2, p. 32). Nevertheless, reaction to these stories appears to have had a bigger impact upon how adults, especially males, may be viewed or treated with suspicion in public spaces, including child-centred environments such as schools (Piper and Stronach, 2008; Furedi and Bristow, 2008) in the United Kingdom as opposed to Spain. Controversy and confusion, surrounding the issue of problematising previously taken for granted practices such as photographing children in public spaces, and concern with sharing photographs of young children in public arenas such as the internet, appears to pervade in both England (Lewis, 2008; Cox, 2009) and Spain (*20minutos*, 2008c; *20minutos*, 2009).

However, my search of media sources, reported upon in Chapter 2, indicated that this issue may be causing more public concern in England than in Spain.

According to sources (The London Metropolitan Police, 2011; Macpherson 2009; Martín, 2010; Carmona, 2010) although there are some legal restrictions about photographing adults and children, in both the UK and Spain, it is not illegal to photograph them in a public place (notwithstanding that organizations and local authorities may have rules about photography as part of their child safeguarding and protection policies).

In turn, both countries have detailed frameworks (DfES 2006; DCSF, 2008b; DfE, 2011; CARM, 2010d) in place for the protection and safeguarding of children. However, in Spain the child protection system is decentralised and is the responsibility of the Autonomous Governments (Casas and Montserrat, 2008; Casas, Montserrat and Malo, 2010). Likewise, Spain has no equivalent to England and Wales' Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures that were an integral part of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (SVGA) (2006). These checks required adults who worked or volunteered with children to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) (2011) and to undergo a search for any current and spent convictions (Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), 2011).

Nevertheless, in response to public pressure to change the vetting and barring scheme (Home Office, 2011a), the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (SVGA) (2006) was amended by the Coalition government (Home Office, 2011b; Mason, 2011). This resulted in the reduction in the number of adults having to register with a state body and submit to monitoring in order to work or volunteer with children. However, at the time of completing this chapter, the impact of these changes has not yet been reported upon and further consultancy continues in 2012 to revise the Safeguarding Statutory Guidance (DfE, 2012).

### 3.16 Summary

In this chapter I began by looking at birth rates in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain. Despite an increase in both countries; they continue to be lower in Spain.

Family-friendly policies loomed large in both countries. The consequences of these are apparent in the contrasting work patterns and child-rearing choices of parents in Spain and England. These are also linked to the availability and type of early childhood education and care provision at national, regional and local levels. Both Spain and England provide almost universal access to early years provision for three- and four-year-olds. However, means-tested benefits and services for under-threes predominate.

In comparing the percentage of the two countries' respective GDPs allocated to family benefits, and to educating their younger children, the UK spends more on both areas. A key tenet of both countries' policy responses to early childhood education and care, and the resulting provision appears to be a lack of emphasis on child-centredness (Lewis, 2006). Spain's provision has been described as an educational model (Scheiwe and Willekens, 2009; Valiente, 2009) and England's provision is equated with a preschool tradition rather than a Froebel kindergarten tradition (Moss, 2001). Both countries are promoting a model of early years education and care that aims to combine caring for children of working parents alongside training them to become educated and responsible adults. However, focusing on children's roles as future citizens may have the effect of viewing them as 'becoming' as opposed to their present state of 'being'. Reversing this trend may, as suggested by Lewis (2006), call for a more child-centred approach.

With regard to the legal frameworks in Spain and the UK, despite changes that narrowed the gap between some of the laws impacting on children; there still remain some disparities. As accentuated, most of these laws are justified on the grounds of protecting or safeguarding children.

The concept of childhood risk, both real and perceived, is common to both the UK and Spain. From a UK perspective, perceptions of this have been blamed for restricting children's freedom, with Spain being somewhat envied for its seemingly lower preoccupation with this. Nevertheless, statistics indicate that the consequences of a further relaxed approach include a higher rate of childhood accidents in Spain as opposed to the UK, and lower safety levels (Mackay and Vincenten, 2009).

In relation to the number of children in care, Spain has been compared unfavourably with the UK; whose figures reflect a lower number of children in residential homes as opposed to family-based settings. However, Spain seemed to have an extremely low level of child maltreatment deaths in comparison with the rest of Europe. It is evident that neglect, physical-, emotional- and sexual abuse are present at both national and regional levels in both England and Spain. In particular, sexual abuse has been a significant cause for concern in both countries and has impacted on both children's and adults' lives; even when they are not the victims or perpetrators.

Thus, as can be gleaned from the categories explored in this chapter, despite there being many apparent similarities between the two societies' treatment of their children, there remain several areas that may be pertinent to the way that children may be viewed differently in the two countries which impact on their physical and social place in society. Nevertheless, based upon the information in

this chapter, there appears to be little evidence specific to either of the countries' structural-level practices which renders one more child-friendly than the other. This indicates that it would be fruitful to investigate what was happening in individual-level practices such as early years settings, and inter-generational spaces such as restaurants, shopping centres and hotels; the results of which I report on in Chapters 6 and 7.

In the next chapter I discuss the literature which I drew upon to help me develop the theoretical framework that I adopted to enable the investigation of adults' beliefs and values about young children; both in pre-compulsory early years settings and in the wider societies.

## **Chapter 4: Literature Review**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The intention of this literature review is to explain the development of the theoretical framework adopted to enable the investigation of adults' attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain. Highlighting the importance of this issue, Phil Jones (2009) has dedicated a book to the changing attitudes to childhood in contemporary society. In this book he usefully emphasises how adults' attitudes, in all their different roles and relationships, can act as barriers (and facilitators) to the development and future of children's lives. Notwithstanding some degree of dissonance where these attitudes may not be entirely coincident with behaviour, I propose that adults' attitudes will subsequently have some bearing on their actions towards, and their treatment of young children, as well as influencing their child-rearing styles.

My discussion begins by looking at how understandings of childhood may impinge on children's positioning in social spaces. I then draw upon some historical constructions of childhood to show how the Dionysian and Apollonian models continue to underpin current ways of thinking about children. This is followed by a discussion of contemporary childhoods. I then look at socially constructed views of childhood popularised by sociologists such as Jenks (1996, 2005), James and Prout (1997) and James and James (2004, 2008). Moving on, I consider the notion of intergenerational relationships. In doing so, I look at topics including children's social behaviour, the protection of children and displays of affection between adults and children. All these factors have the potential to act as barriers in fostering positive relationships between children and adults, to

underpin adults' attitudes and lead to restrictions on children's presence in intergenerational shared spaces.

The constructs of individualism and collectivism have been used to understand the cultural differences in child-rearing; aspects of the former being associated with some of the problems of childhood in modern Western societies such as the UK (The Children's Society, 2009). In considering the presence of these constructs in my own study I present some arguments for and against their application. With the aim of contextualising my own research study within the field, I then review a selection of small-scale comparative studies undertaken in the early years field. Finally I look at some frameworks for understanding cultural differences, present my working definition of the slippery concept of culture and introduce the conceptual framework used for the first part of my own fieldwork investigation; the developmental niche.

#### **4.1 The physical and social spaces that children occupy**

##### **Shared or separate spaces: segregation or integration?**

One particular comment from Jenks (2005) is helpful in thinking about how children occupy spaces:

‘...we might suggest that children either occupy designated spaces, that is they are placed, as in nurseries or schools, or they are conspicuous by their inappropriate or precocious invasion of adult territory’ (p.73).

Such statements are the inspiration for inquiry into how different cultures, different countries, different localities place or position children in their societies and what factors underpin these decisions. As an alternative to children ‘invading’



this adult territory, there is also the possibility that they may be welcomed into it. Jenks (1996, 2005) also suggests that there has been a change in the social spaces that adults and children occupy. As well as the character of these spaces changing, Jenks proposes that there has been a transmogrification in relation to the previous fixed identities of adults, children and family. Consequently, this may explain some of the contentions (discussed in Chapter 2 and 3) about what are appropriate places for children and the reasons given for admitting them or not.

Contextualising her discussion of societal structures, in relation to children's lives, within her research undertaken in Germany, Zeiher (2001) examines how contemporary society has shaped childhood both temporally and spatially. In doing so, she argues that a combination of factors such as heavy traffic, ornamental parks and the development of open spaces has driven children out of the public sphere. Additionally, she asserts that the creation of child-specific environments has resulted in 'a massive interference of adult society into children's daily lives' (p.145). As a result of such initiatives, children's and adults' lives may become further segregated from each other. A similar view is reflected in Francesco Tonucci's (2003, 2004) work undertaken in Italy in which he argues that children need to be helped to reclaim their place in intergenerational public spaces. This is echoed in the growing field of literature on children's geographies (McKendrick, 2000; Holloway and Valentine, 2000a; 2000b; Baylina Ferré, Ortiz Guitart, Prats Ferret, 2006; Ortiz Guitart 2007; Cucurella, Garcia-Ramon, Baylina, 2006; De Visscher and Bouverne-de Bie, 2005, 2008a; 2008b). Examples of these papers have proved helpful in reflecting upon some of the differences in provided and non-provided provision for children in the UK and Spain reported in Chapter 7.

Children's acceptance in public places may be dependent on the type of behaviour that certain adults privilege. Consequently, positive behaviour and negative behaviour are socially constructed concepts underpinned by the types of behaviours that adults find acceptable or not. Likewise, children's behaviour may not always be compatible with cultural and social expectations on the proper way to act in different situations. Although referring to American cultural assumptions about desirable baby behaviour, Hoffman (2003) suggested that these may encompass an array of ideas that are underpinned by a 'tacit developmentalism' that privileges those babies and children who demonstrate adult-like qualities, such as no crying, as soon as possible (p.193). Thus, becoming better informed about the places or positions that children occupy in the public spaces in England and Spain, and investigating the underpinning reasons for their presence or absence is pertinent to defining their social location within the two societies.

Qvortrup (2004), referring to work by Milligan and Brayfield (2004) which compared how two museums approached visits from children, introduced the concept of 'displaying a compassion for children's presence' (p.271). In highlighting the apparent absence of this concept in the museums focused upon, Milligan and Brayfield questioned why children were sought as attendees at the museums. Beyond practical factors such as attendance rates dominated by the survival of the organizations, children's presence was viewed as being couched in relation to socialization measures and the aims of producing a future audience (p.271).

Accordingly, the findings of this study may have implications for thinking about alternative public spaces that actively encourage, tolerate or prohibit children, and in turn may hold different agendas, although not always obvious,

about their approaches to children. These issues are also relevant to my own research in which I aimed to become more knowledgeable about the social location of children within the cultures under investigation.

## **4.2 Past childhoods**

A useful starting point for becoming better informed about some factors that underpin individual and societal attitudes towards young children, has been an exploration of the literature that focuses on the study of past childhoods. Historical trends in the social construction of children and childhood have been examined and written about in detail by several authors (Ariès, 1962, 1996; Cunningham, 1991, 1995, 2006; Hendrick, 1994, 1997a, 1997b; Pollock, 1983; Gittins, 2004). The work of these authors reveals how models of childhood have changed across time. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind the extent to which these models may have differed historically in other locations (Jenks, 1996, 2005). Consequently, this is an important issue that needs to be considered when discussing models of contemporary childhoods. These childhoods may vary with regard to both demographic and socioeconomic conditions, and also in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, gender and class (Madge, 2006).

Pertinent to this variability, some of Ariès' claims about past childhoods have been challenged on the grounds that his work relied heavily on a certain strata of children; those from the middle and upper classes, and those over the age of seven years (Pollock, 1983). However, Ariès' contribution to the study of childhood has highlighted the societal and temporal universality of childhood, demonstrating that ideas about childhood do change and are also embedded within different cultures. In turn, there is general agreement amongst historians (Hendrick, 1997a) that a

recognised conceptualisation of childhood emerged, first among the middle classes, around the seventeenth century.

As suggested by Hollos (2002) the study of past childhoods in the West tends to emphasise the economic worth of children as opposed to their sentimental value. Undoubtedly, in most societies children were needed as part of the workforce to sustain the economy and therefore, it would have been impractical to spend too much time dwelling on the particular needs of childhood. In the later Middle Ages the appearance of a more comfortable middle class postponed some children's entry into the labour market. A number of parents were able to value their children for emotional reasons (Kehily, 2010). Alongside this change, children began to be separated from adults into schools (Ariès, 1996). As Mayall (2006) portends, the separation of children from adulthood has a long history.

### **Dionysian and Apollonian models of childhood**

In European history, two opposing views of thinking about childhood have been identified. Jenks (1996, 2005) refers to these as the Dionysian model and the Apollonian model. In relation to the first image, it was thought that children were born evil. This view is underpinned by much Christian literature which stressed the need for redemption and the extent to which humankind is innately evil. Thus, it was the duty of parents to educate their children, to get rid of unfortunate characteristics and behaviours, with the aim of redeeming them in order that they became effective adults. The child-rearing method predominantly associated with this image is one associated with discipline, control and regulation (Stone, 1977; Stainton-Rogers, 2001). In turn, adults adopt more interventionist roles rather than acting as supportive props (Wyness, 2006).

On the other hand, the Apollonian image assumed that children were born innocent but were corrupted by being in the adult world. This image can also be located within the jurisdictions of the Christian church. For example, during the Middle Ages, it was usual at religious ceremonies to dress children in white as a symbol of their innocence. This image had contrasting implications for child-rearing with the emphasis being on creating a nurturing and protective environment in which children were given the opportunity to flourish as individuals. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries a school of literature appeared which stressed the innocence of children; for example, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's classic text *Emile* (Rousseau, 1762: translation Allan Bloom, 1979) and the poems of William Wordsworth (Wordsworth; Hayden, 1994). In keeping with this view, the early years educator Friedrich Froebel, who was considered unorthodox from the point of view of organized religion, suggested that children possessed a divine essence that needed to be unfolded and protected (Froebel, 1887, republished 2005).

Cunningham (1995) suggests that the Dionysian and Apollonian images may still be recognisable in contemporary understandings of childhood. Mayall (2006) argues that the child as victim and the child as threat dominate media accounts of childhood. The Apollonian child-centred approach and its emphasis on protecting children may have become more salient especially in the context of safeguarding children, and promoting their health and wellbeing. However, appeals for further parental control and UK policies that have responded to these calls by introducing measures such as parenting orders and dispersal zones may be reflective of the Dionysian image. I now look at how this dichotomy is still prevalent amidst the concerns of contemporary childhoods.

### 4.3 Contemporary childhoods

Contemporary scholarly and popular literature in looking at childhood and child-rearing encompasses various perspectives such as the consequences of living in a risk averse society (Gill, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Piper and Stronach, 2008; Furedi & Bristow, 2008; Guldberg, 2009; Lee, Macvarish and Bristow, 2010), and the moral panics about parents, children and childhood (Freely, 2002; Brooks, 2006; Furedi, 2002, 2008a; Bristow 2009). Much of this material highlights the consequences of over-restricting children's physical freedom or independence, and calls for more opportunities to enable children to take risks (New, Mardell and Robinson, 2005; Nimmo, 2008). Inherent in these publications is a tension between risk and safety (Cameron, 2007) and dilemmas about reasonably protecting, and over-protecting children (Wyver, *et al.*, 2010).

Other commentators write of disappearing childhoods (Winn, 1984; Postman, 1994), warn of the toxic perils of modern society (Large, 2003; Palmer, 2006, 2007) and propose possible solutions to create better childhoods (Leach, 1994; Crain, 2003; Clinton, 2007; Layard and Dunn, 2009). Hardyment (2007) usefully summarises the barrage of conflicting expert childcare advice that parents have been bombarded with over the past three centuries and urges parents to draw upon their common sense.

Concern has been expressed in relation to the availability of, and design of children's play areas. Some authors (Gill, 2007a; Gleave, 2008) argue that, in attempting to reduce the risk of children's accidents, playgrounds have become too clinical and thus lack challenge. Additionally, McKendrick, Bradford and Fielder (2000) propose that some playgrounds may have been designed with

adults in mind rather than children. Thus, if playgrounds are perceived to be safe, adults are able to have a break from children, and do not have to worry about supervising them. Consequently, some overtly child-centred spaces may belie their superficial image and may warrant further scrutiny to ascertain intended purpose and actual use.

As part of the movement to create better childhoods, measures have been taken to instate children as active participants with a greater presence in society, as opposed to viewing them as objects in need of protection, incapable or incompetent. Influential forces propelling such measures are the children's rights movement underpinned by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) and an influx of child-centred research methodologies (Hart, 1992; Clark, Trine Kjørholt and Moss, 2005). This body of work is based on a view that children are experts of their own lives (Lansdown, 2005; Moss and Petrie, 2002; Christensen and James, 2008). Within this context, children are viewed as human beings in the here and now, and this rights perspective also aims to draw upon children's contribution in defining and measuring their own well-being (Casas, 1997, 1998).

However, Casas stresses that children's satisfaction with their lives does not just depend on meeting their developmental needs or fostering their rights. Accordingly, he advocates a quality of life discourse which looks at the positive qualities that children and families possess. This initiative is viewed as a way of avoiding the problematizing of children (Stainton-Rogers, 2004) and also enables a consideration of cultural factors, and their influence and status within families and communities.

Nevertheless, as highlighted by The Children's Society (2006) the ways in which childhood and children are viewed remains contradictory, uncertain and informed by dichotomous attitudes. Children may be seen as vulnerable and in need of protection, or on the other hand as a threat to society (Jones, 2009). This is echoed by Beunderman, Hannon and Bradwell (2007) who write of the tension between the fear for children and the fear of children, and of the attitudes and policies towards children that are framed around an instrumentalised view of them. Thus, within the context of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Western society the focus is on '...a child's preparedness to become an economically productive member of society' (p.83). Qvortrup (2004) draws attention to the problem of viewing children as the future or the next generation in that it fails to recognise the idea of childhood as having value in itself. This perspective is echoed by Casas (2006) and Loreman (2009). Casas argues that viewing children as becoming future adults, future citizens, and forming the future society places too much emphasis on their future value, and neglects their present contribution to society. Equally, Loreman calls for [adults'] views of children that permit them to be children which allow them to live their childhoods in the present rather than looking to how they can become successful and competitive adults.

In turn, Thomas and Hocking (2003) suggested that there are three major contemporary stereotypes of children and add the spoilt child to the previously discussed categories of Apollonian angel and Dionysian devil. These recurring labels assigned to children give support to Casas' (2006) view that deep-rooted representations of childhood are resistant to change, and may be creating gaps in communication between generations. On the other hand James and James (2004) argue that adult notions of childhood alter in accordance with changes in



children's behaviour, as do the mechanisms of control that regulate children and childhood. Consequently, the agency of children is constructed differently in every society in response to the wishes and needs of adults, rather than those of the children. Wyness (2006) puts forward the idea that a tension may arise as adults attempt to hold on to a nostalgic but outdated conception of children. In doing so, adults strive to 'maintain the upper hand where children expect to be consulted' (p.71). Therefore, how children are viewed will depend on whether they are seen to have their own identity or viewed as becoming adults. Consequently, as James and Prout (1997) suggest 'Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single or universal phenomenon' (pp. 8-9). In turn, this notion of different kinds of childhoods underpins the social constructionist argument that I discuss in the next section.

#### **4.4 Socially constructed views of childhood**

Sociologists and academics such as Jenks (1996, 2005); Moss and Petrie (2002) and James and Prout (1997) have drawn attention to the view of childhood as a social construct. This is defined by James and James (2004) as the:

...complex interweaving of social structures, political and economic institutions, beliefs, cultural mores, laws, policies and the everyday actions of both adults and children, in the home and on the street...(p.13)

Much sociological research in the UK has been undertaken within the umbrella of the social construction of childhood. The basic assumption that childhood is a social construct reveals that understandings of childhood and the meanings that are placed upon children vary considerably not only from culture to culture, but

also within the history of any one culture. As James and Prout (1997) suggest, exploring the ways in which childhood is socially constructed involves investigating how children's immaturity is perceived and acknowledged in certain societies to form 'culturally specific sets of ideas and philosophies, attitudes and practices' (p.1).

Jenks (1996, 2005) looked at the social factors that make up our knowledge of children and childhood. In doing so, he presented a critical framework through which to understand private attitudes and public policy in relation to the child, viewing childhood from a social constructionist perspective. Jenks also suggested that, '...in contemporary European culture [the child emerges] as a formal category and as a social status embedded in programmes of care, routines of surveillance and schemes of education, and assessment. Such accounts ensure that the child is realised as the social construction of a particular historical context'. Jenks moved on to state that,

The status of childhood has its boundaries maintained through the crystallization of conventions and discourses into lasting institutional forms like families, nurseries, schools and clinics, all agencies specifically designed and established to process the child as a uniform identity' (pp.5-6).

As Madge (2006) suggested, although there may be commonalities in children's lives, factors such as their age, gender, family structure, culture, neighbourhood and ethnicity may impact on the reality of their experiences. Thus the child is conceptualised within both the spectrum of everyday attitudes and the professional discourses of the social sciences. Jenks (1996, 2005) also draws attention to two

elements that appear common to the mainstream of approaches to the study of childhood:

1. A foundational belief that the child instances difference and particularity;
2. A universal cultural desire to both achieve and account for the integration of that difference into a more broadly conceived sense of order and generality that comprises adult society (p.3).

Legal frameworks exert power and control over the child and define boundaries. Whilst there is no specific demarcated transition from childhood to adulthood, children move through a process where they acquire further legal and social responsibilities. In effect they move from being legal minors to those who enjoy majority rights. However, as highlighted in Chapter 3 of this thesis (pp. 95-101) the laws that impinge on children's lives vary within the European Community and more specifically, for the purpose of this study, between England and Spain. In this sense, as Archard (1993) indicates, the distinction between childhood and adulthood is totally arbitrary and culturally bound. As emphasised by James and Prout (1997), age can be used to legally exclude children from a variety of adult spaces. In turn, these authors offer a useful paradigm for considering the relevance of sociological theory in understanding childhood. The main points are summarised here:

- Childhood is understood as a social construction and provides an interpretive frame for contextualising the early years of life. As distinct from biological immaturity, childhood is neither a natural nor universal feature appearing as structural and cultural component of many societies.

- Childhood is a variable of social analysis linked to variables such as class, gender or ethnicity. Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods.
- Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right; independent of adults.
- Children are seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them, and the societies in which they live.
- Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood.
- To proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology is to engage in, and respond to the process of reconstructing childhood in society (p.8).

Notwithstanding James and Prout's references to 'children's cultures' in this paradigm, in a report resulting from a 2009 workshop (Twum-Danso, 2009) chaired by Professor Alison James, the following point was made:

Although the concept of childhood as a social construction is now a familiar concept within the social sciences, the cultural consequences of these various constructions remain an area that has not been sufficiently explored (p.1).

Authors such as the Stainton-Rogers (1992) reject any biological foundation to childhood. However, social constructionists' emphasis on difference as opposed to its identification of common features of childhood has been critiqued (Gittins, 1998; Moss and Petrie, 2002). Whilst acknowledging the existence of different childhoods, but recognising some basis for viewing children as a separate group from adults, I now discuss intergenerational relationships. As Qvortrup (2001) reminds, when deciding to understand the position of childhood, in methodological terms, generational differences are paramount (p.224).

#### **4.5 Intergenerational relationships**

Mannheim (cited in Mayall and Zeiher, 2003) defined generation as a ‘unique group of people born in the same period and region and becoming older together’ (p.5). In turn, this definition is based on an understanding that generations will have both common attitudes and cultural identities that may result in a collective identity (Corsten, 2003). As a structural sociological concept for studying childhood, generation looks at the interrelations between the social categories of childhood and adulthood (Mayall and Zeiher, 2003).

Societies, through their various structures, laws, policies and rules tend to separate children and adults (James and James, 2004). Several authors suggest that as a group, children may be becoming further excluded from the adult social world (Qvortrup, 1994; Mayall, 2002; Nimmo, 2008) which Corsaro (2003) refers to as age segregation. Leach (1994) indicates that children may be viewed as an ‘out-group’ based upon their perceived inferiority to adults and may be assigned their own set of rules that could equally be applied to some adults’ behaviour. Hence, this results in a form of discrimination towards children. As Corsaro (1997) points out, rules aimed specifically at children may reflect a negative view of children and infer that because some children behave badly, they all do.

Nevertheless, Madge (2006) pointed out that in some ways the gap between the generations has narrowed as people of all ages may share cultures, clothes and attitudes. Other authors (Kincheloe, 2001; Casas 2006) write about the increasingly blurred boundaries between childhood and adulthood, and as an extreme case the disappearance of childhood (Postman, 1994) based upon the rapid development of technologies and the media. In referring to the impact of the

media culture in contemporary Western societies, Kincheloe (2001) suggests that this will result in new cultural spaces where intergenerational relations will be redefined, the child's role in the family will be renegotiated, and the child's "social usefulness" will be reconsidered. Additionally, he proposes that the nature of childhood will also be modified (p.xiv).

Although social behaviour and attitudes may not display as wide a generation gap as they did in the past (Madge, 2006), generational differences may still remain in relation to thinking about children and childhood. In particular, James and James (2004) remark on the UK's, 'less than enthusiastic response to redefine childhood and the place of children in society' (p.106). These authors draw upon Freeman (1998) who observed that 'we have also to appreciate that ours is a culture that does not particularly like children' and his reference to the frequently quoted phrase that "children should be seen and not heard" which he states has an 'authentically English ring about it' (pp. 105-106). Drawing upon Max Weber, Hood-Williams (2001) emphasised 'the arbitrary whimsical nature of age patriarchy' (p.109) that becomes evident not only in what is considered as being appropriate behaviour for a good child, but also in relation to the techniques used for disciplining children. However, James and James (2004) are optimistic that as children become further involved in the political and policy processes that impact upon them, a process of intergenerational change will be set in motion.

Encouraging positive intergenerational relationships may be viewed as a means of breaking down barriers between generations. In *The Good Childhood Inquiry* (Pople, 2009) on behalf of *The Children's Society* some of the comments from the professionals who submitted to the report indicated that interactions between

generations were necessary because ‘...people of all ages need to mix, talk and listen to each other’ (p.15).

Although drawing upon data collected in Scotland, and with the emphasis upon older children and young people, Anderson and Dobbie (2008) looked at public attitudes towards young people and youth crime; focusing on how individuals and communities respond to the acts of crime. In conclusion, their work indicated that there was a link between levels of general social connectedness, inter-generational contact, perception of young people and youth crime, and the willingness to intervene. However, an unanticipated finding was that a large proportion of males may be deterred from intervening, not because of fears for their own safety, but because of concerns that they may be falsely accused of threatening behaviour or assault.

A survey undertaken by *Barnardo's/You Gov* (2008) indicated that some adults thought children behaved like animals. Responding to these findings, Furedi (2008b) argued that British adults have become estranged from the world of children; a theme he has explored in additional publications (Furedi, 2002, 2008a). In Furedi’s opinion, several factors contribute to what he defines as Anglo-American adults’ negative attitudes towards children, and the breakdown in intergenerational relationships. These factors include ‘the mistrust and suspicion fuelled by the prevailing paranoid regime of child protection’ and an ‘...obsessively protective parenting culture’. Furedi (2008b) proposes that an increase in single households, childlessness, having children later in life and growing individuation contribute to childcare becoming a private enterprise for parents. As a result of these changes he suggests that adults ‘avoid taking

responsibility for other people's children' and children view 'grown-ups as strangers who are likely to be dangerous'.

A report by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) (2007) sought to become better informed about adults' attitudes towards contact with children and young people. Participants, in expressing their ideas about volunteering with different age groups, described younger children (0-5 years) in terms of their vulnerability, their need for care and attention, and their need to learn. Although most people tended to focus on their negative experiences with children, participants who had regular contact with children or young people were more likely to talk about children on a more positive note. However, when questioned about factors that may prevent them from volunteering with children and young people the recurring theme of being accused of harming children was high on the list. Similarly, Qvortrup (2008) proposes that protection may co-exist with exclusion. In keeping with my discussion on 'touching children' (see pp.136-139.), he suggests how the protection of children may work to protect adults, adding that it may also be utilised to shield adults against 'disturbances from the presence of children' (p.87).

The link between children's anti-social behaviour and the gap between generations may seem to be an overly simplistic explanation for negative attitudes towards children. However, the notion of intergenerational relationships and the resulting interactions, a key feature of early years settings and also wider societies, presents itself as a worthwhile avenue of investigation both in terms of their type and frequency.

In the next section I reflect on how intergenerational relationships may vary between the societies of the UK and Spain. To do so, I focus upon some cultural



differences in affective behaviours such as touching and hugging; particularly among adults and children. These behaviours present a potential channel of investigation in my own exploration of adult and child interactions.

### **Affective identification with children**

Following on from her research in three European countries, Penn (1997) openly commented on the variations in attitudes towards touching children and in defining sexual abuse. This issue is a complex one, especially in the context of the widening circle of adults in the United Kingdom who are required to obtain a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check if they come into contact with children in paid or voluntary roles. Significantly, Spain has no equivalent check (see Chapter 3, p. 114). Piper and colleagues (Piper and Smith, 2003; Piper, Powell and Smith, 2006; Piper, MacLure and Stronach, 2006; Piper and Stronach, 2008; Piper, 2009) have written extensively on the topic of ‘touch’ in child care and education settings in England.

Concern has been expressed in relation to the growing prohibition on touching children (Thomas, cited in Twum-Danso, 2009; Owen and Gillentine, 2011). This anxiety has resulted in some UK child-related settings becoming ‘no-touch’ zones (Piper, *et al.*, 2006). In common with my earlier discussion, this initiative has been linked to the negative impact of intergenerational relationships between adults and children (Piper, 2009; Piper and Stronach, 2008). This scheme has also prevented children from receiving comfort from adults (Thomas, cited in Twum-Danso, 2009). In referring to England and Wales, Thomas suggests that societies may be being created where children are not touched by adults. The apparent decline in touching children also runs counter to the implied necessity of touch in meeting

children's developmental needs (Caulfield, 2000; Powell, *et al.*, 2004). This issue was also evident in some early years practitioners' attempts at resisting the 'no-touch' culture by expressing their pride in being 'touchy-feely' (Piper and Stronach, 2008):

We are a nursery school. As such it is vitally necessary to establish warm supportive relationships with young children – so staff are encouraged to touch and cuddle our children (p.45).

Additionally, some areas of touching children have been professionalized or have even become, as suggested by Piper and Stronach (2008), 'therapeutic', 'sanitised' and 'organised' (p.3). For example, the practice of baby massage (Heath and Bainbridge, 2000; Walker, 2000; McGuinness, 2003) is an activity offered in some early years settings in the form of organised classes. As pointed out by Piper, in the UK there is no specific legislation banning touching. Nevertheless, she does draw attention to the guidelines of acceptable practice that schools and local authorities have developed themselves. After examining related policies, regulations and guidelines Piper concluded that the main intention of these publications is to protect the adult workers and the respective agencies that employ them against litigation. This observation is contrary to the public rationale whose apparent aims are to protect the children. Piper (2009) equates this with the social construction of the child as victim, vulnerable and in need of protection but who can also be dangerous.

Hence, it also becomes necessary to protect the professionals who work with children from any false accusations they may encounter. Thus, Piper, Powell and Smith (2006), suggest that this has arisen from a culture of fear rather than one focused on caring. With this in mind, the preoccupation with protecting children

from being abused and shielding adults from being accused of abuse, may result in the needs of the children being misplaced. Of particular interest to this thesis, especially with regard to England and Spain, are the potentially different cultural touching behaviours. Differences have been noted in touching behaviours by various authors (Tobin, 1997; Field, 1999). Their work has highlighted differences between Anglo-American societies and countries such as Japan and France, and Spain and Holland (Sánchez Medina and Martínez Lozano, 2001).

Referring to England, Montagu (as quoted in Piper *et al.* 2006) proposed that 'England is a land full of peculiar people...adults, who seldom touch each other...' (p.157). In two articles (Piper, *et al.*, 2006; Piper and Smith, 2003) Spain is selected as an example of a country whose attitudes to touch may vary in comparison with England. One of the authors (Hannah Smith) moved to Barcelona from England. In the first article (Piper *et al.*, 2006) she is noted as having '...observed a very different practice in touching behaviours in English and Spanish contexts' (p.167). With reference to the second article (Piper and Smith, 2003), Piper comments on her personal observation of a school exchange comprising a mixed group of Spanish teenagers and their teachers, and an English group. Although all the young people touched each other freely, the behaviour of the adults varied significantly. In turn, the English teachers acted in a formal manner and the only touching behaviour observed involved shaking hands. Conversely, as Piper (in Piper and Smith, 2003, p.884) noted, the Spanish teachers appeared to behave in the same manner as the young people. Consequently, Piper and Smith (2003) suggest further cross-cultural observations of touching cultures, such as Spain and lesser touching cultures, such as Britain would be informative. As the authors also mention, the interpretation of cultural comparisons would need

to avoid the assumption that more touching is always best by considering relative tolerance levels towards harassment. Nevertheless, this is an area of research to which my own study can potentially make a contribution.

#### **4.6 Researching children, childhood and child-rearing: understanding cultural differences and similarities**

##### **Individualism and Collectivism**

Many of the perceived problems associated with contemporary child-rearing have been linked to the evils of individualism (Thomas and Hocking, 2003; Layard and Dunn, 2009). Thus, considering that individualism could be detrimental to positive childhoods, it seems possible that the collective values of a country, may render it being perceived as more ‘child-friendly’. On a similar theme, Brooks (2006) stressed that ‘Parenting cannot happen in isolation’ and reminded us alongside Clinton (2007) of the much quoted phrase claimed to be from an African proverb ‘It takes a village to raise a child’. In the context of British society she moved on to suggest that:

We need to break with our ambivalence, whereby we worry hugely about our own children but feel equivocal about others, especially those deemed ‘antisocial’. We need to work as a community, taking an interest in and responsibility for all children, rather than leaving them to individual parents... (p.334).

This stance is compatible with how Bob Reitemeier, Chief Executive of ‘The Children’s Society’, a charity allied to the Church of England, (its full title being

‘The Church of England Children’s Society’) responded to The Children’s Society’s ‘*Good Childhood Inquiry*’ (2009) on its website:

This landmark report for The Children’s Society says the aggressive pursuit of individual success by adults is now the greatest threat to our children and we are determined to do something about that. Essentially the report brings a taboo into the open which is that we have to confront our selfish and individualistic culture. We need to realise that we are collectively responsible for the welfare of all children and that together we can make childhood better.

The related report (Layard and Dunn, 2009), resulting from a two-year study of modern childhood, concluded by recommending that, ‘We need a more positive attitude to children, where we welcome them into society and want to help them’ (p.162). Notwithstanding that this conclusion may have been reached via religious convictions, one way of helping to understand cultural differences and similarities, and their influences on educational practices, has been to make use of a collectivistic and individualistic framework. The continuum of collectivism-individualism represents the degree to which a culture places emphasis on fostering interdependent relations, social responsibility, and the well-being of the group versus fostering independence and individual fulfilment (Trumbull, *et al.*, 2001). In turn, the former label has been assigned to Hispanic countries and the latter to Anglo-Saxon, northern European cultural contexts (Triandis, 1990, 1995; Ho, Holmes and Cooper, 2004). Other studies have drawn upon alternative terms to describe the concepts of individualism and collectivism such as modern and traditional (Palacios and Moreno, 1996), and independence and interdependence (Raeff, 2006).

Nevertheless, employing these dichotomies may be a simplistic way of viewing societies especially as a number of studies have found that individualism and collectivism appear to coexist not only within societies but also within individuals (Killen and Wainryb, 2000; Harkness, Super and van Tijen, 2000; Raeff, 2006). Thus, it appears more prudent to view these distinctions as ‘...graded, interrelated, and multi-dimensional’ (Huijbregts *et al.* 2008, p.234), and ‘developed into a more dynamic, multi-faceted model’ (Rosenthal and Roer-Strier, 2006, p.526) or as ideal types at opposite ends of a continuum (Greenfield and Cocking, 1994). Therefore, rather than categorizing societies, into one type or another the challenge appears to lie in finding ways of conceptualising how ‘individualistic and collectivistic values and beliefs are interwoven and instantiated’ (Cheah and Chirkov, 2008, p.403).

Kağıtçıbaşı (1996) proposed the idea of the ‘autonomous relational self’ in relation to Western conceptualizations of independence that confound the dimensions of agency/autonomy and relatedness. In turn, she argued that most ‘modern’ thinking about early childhood is located within the construct of individualism, which emphasises parents’ psychological value of the child, and child-rearing goals related to independence and autonomy. Cheah and Chirkov (2008) define agency as being concerned with the amount of control individuals have over their behaviour and actions while relatedness is concerned with the sense of psychological connectedness among individuals and the feeling of belongingness with one’s family, community, or cultural group.

As Harkness and Super (2002) suggested, the relational autonomous self may be more typical of continental European societies (such as Spain) that may be undertaking a process of changing from traditional to modern. In relation to the

UK, Rose (1999) argued that a shift from a social state to an advanced liberal state is taking place. Accordingly, within an advanced liberal society independence is crucial to making individual choices and these choices are an expression of modern identity. Relative to this, Brehony (2000) discusses how modernity and the emergence of the individual become apparent in the context of pedagogical practices of whole-class and individual teaching methods. Ultimately, a propensity for one or the other will also be revealing of the asymmetry of adult-child relationships in formal care and educational institutions. Keeping this in mind, I now move on to consider some aspects of adult-child intergenerational relationships in early years based comparative studies.

#### **Comparative Studies with a focus upon early years**

Within the field of early years education and care there are relatively few cross-cultural or comparative studies between England and Spain that have looked at the differences between the countries, contexts and participants. Indeed, it is noteworthy, as Harkness and Super (2006) pointed out, that much cross-cultural work has focused upon Africa (Hollos, 2002), Latin America, the Pacific and Asia whereas fewer cross-cultural studies have compared Western cultures. These authors move on to suggest that, in relation to ideas and practices of parenting, the issue of cultural variability is relevant as families are the ones who are rearing the next generation of citizens who will be required to work together across cultural boundaries. Additionally, they view cross-cultural research across Western cultures as helping to identify both universals and differences.

The work of early childhood researchers, such as Penn (1997, 2005) and David (1993, 1998a), in reporting upon their comparative studies have highlighted how

differences in social policies, systems, philosophy, culture and organization may impact on practice in early years settings in European countries. Other small-scale comparative studies, although not all Europe based, such as those of Tobin, Wu and Davidson (1989); Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa, (2009); Lubeck (1985); Farver and Lee Shin (1997); Corsaro (2003, 2011); Kwon (2003); Rayna (2004) have also highlighted links between the organisation of early years settings and their wider social and cultural contexts.

Penn (1997) used ethnographical observations in her comparative study of early childhood settings in Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), and Italy. Despite criticisms of her sampling techniques (Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford, 2001), Penn's (1997, 2005) examples of four nurseries in Spain gave insight into different settings. These examples also highlighted the impact of their wider communities and their values on the settings' organisation and practice. In particular, one Spanish nursery was described by Penn (2005), 'where daily life was like an ongoing party', (p.166) defined by staff who take pleasure from being in the company of children and displays of physical affection between both adults and children.

Research by Tobin *et al.* (1989) (also see Tobin *et al.*, 2009) demonstrated how a comparative study of just three preschools – one in Japan; one in China and one in the United States has the potential to produce rich data reflective of child-rearing philosophies and early childhood education. Likewise Lubeck's (1986) 'Sandbox Society' small-scale comparison of two contrasting preschool settings in the USA explored how cultural values and attitudes may be transmitted to children. This study usefully demonstrated how settings can become 'windows' to enable the observation of child-rearing strategies of the caretakers. In his



ethnographical study of young children, Corsaro (2003) attempted to enter into their peer cultures to interpret their perspectives. This led him to suggest that Italian preschoolers are further integrated into the everyday lives of their teachers, parents and Italian society than their counterparts in the United States. However, as with Penn, Corsaro's (2003) representative nature of his samples needs to be viewed with caution. Although his American examples comprised 'upper-class and middle-class American kids, economically disadvantaged African-American kids' his Italian sample was 'primarily middle-class Italian kids' (p.x).

Although only spending one week in each of six settings, Kwon (2003) summarised some of the contrasting features of preschool education in England and Korea. In doing so, she highlighted the underpinning historical and philosophical backgrounds and the key characteristics of the respective curricula. In particular, she suggested how these features became apparent in preschool educators' perceptions, the organisation of the classroom, approaches to teaching and the curriculum that was offered in the preschool settings. Kwon identified significant social and cultural differences between the two countries. For example, a key feature of preschool education in England was found to be the emphasis assigned to developing the individuality, independence and autonomy of young children with teachers adopting the roles as facilitators of the environment. In contrast, in Korean preschools importance was given to whole-group activities and the kindergarten teachers tended to be more authoritarian and strict.

Similar observations are echoed in articles by Nancy K. Freeman (1998) and Pang and Richey (2007) that compared preschool education in China and the United States. Although not collecting any specific empirical data for the article,

and predominantly relying on personal reflections, Pang and Richey defined Chinese preschool educational practice by its focus on teacher-directed, whole-group instruction where ‘children are expected to do the same thing at the same time’ (p. 3). Alternatively, the United States’ kindergartens prioritised the development of children’s individualism, independence, creativity and liberty. In turn, children were offered more opportunities for free playtime, a wider selection of playthings and further affective relationships with adult caretakers than their Chinese counterparts.

Rayna’s (2004) study of under-ones in day care centres in France and Japan analysed practitioners’ responses to sequences representing daily activities in the centres (arrival, play activities, toilet times, lunchtime and naptime). These activities were revealing in terms of the practitioners’ beliefs and practices in relation to day care, which Rayna suggested were reflective of the differences between French and Japanese cultural norms and values. In particular, tensions between the two cultures were apparent in terms of the emphasis practitioners gave to physical care, affective contact and, autonomous activities and individualized interactions.

*The Children Crossing Borders Project* (Tobin and Kurban, 2010a, 2010b) used videocued and multivocal ethnography (Tobin *et al.*, 1989) to investigate the discourses of teachers, parents and children in relation to the ‘construction of the immigrant child’ in five countries (Italy, Germany, France, the United States and England). The French strand (Brougère, Guénif-Souilamas and Rayna, 2008) of this project also highlighted differences in relation to the favoured values and principles apparent in French and USA preschools that underpinned the promotion of children’s autonomy, the affective relations between practitioners and children,

and the respective levels of curriculum organisation and structure. Additionally, *The Children Crossing Borders Project* is helpful in drawing attention to how some young children may become caught up in the middle between the contrasting cultures of home and the preschool.

Similarly, Brooker's (2003) ethnographic study of UK (Anglo) families and Bangladeshi families illustrated the culturally regulated nature of their views of childhood. In turn, her findings indicated disparities between the parents' concepts of childhood, their theories of intelligence and instruction, and the pedagogical practices of the school settings. Significantly, the Bangladeshi children were seen as co-habiting the world of adults rather than 'inhabiting a separate childhood world, which is put away at bedtime, as the Anglo children do' (p.74).

Pertinent to the previously discussed constructs of individualism and collectivism, Cameron (2007) explored the discourse on children's independence and choice in early childhood settings in England. Drawing upon the Sophos method (also inspired by and developed from the Preschool in Three Cultures Method, Tobin *et al.* 1989), observer groups, comprising [early childhood] *care workers and experts*, were shown 30-minute videos of childcare work in England, Hungary and Denmark. Although Spain is one of the countries included in the wider project that this study focused upon, unfortunately it was not included in this article. The comments from English observer groups highlighted tensions between two goals common to early childhood practice and its structure, namely the 'ethos of individuality'; when children exercise choice and the 'ethos of collectivity'; when children are provided with participatory group activities. In turn, the English groups' notions of choice and independence were defined in

terms of giving priority to ‘practising decision-making, expressing individuality, experiencing creativity and experiencing freedom’ (p.479).

On the other hand, observers in Hungary and Denmark appeared to have different understandings of independence. The Hungarian observers saw independence as training for self-reliance in relation to toileting and dressing. However, the Danish observers preferred to speak of interdependence; viewing ‘individual self-expression and community life’ (p.483) as complementary. They also interpreted the English practice as being ‘highly controlled by adults and...oriented towards the ‘learning child’. Cameron concluded that values, such as those oriented towards independence, reflect a cultural and ideological moment in the English early childhood discourse. In turn, Cameron’s work, whilst making no attempt to understand the observers’ cultural beliefs and values as reflecting those of the countries, did highlight a possible relationship between early years practice and the wider discourses on the societal place of independence.

Thus, these studies indicate that the structure of early years settings, and the resulting social interactions, determined by the people who frequent them, that take place in these settings potentially reflect the social, affective and cognitive rules of the cultures under investigation. I now move on to look at some potential frameworks in which to situate my own research after presenting my interpretation of the concept culture. However, as emphasised earlier there is an absence of small-scale studies that have compared cultural differences, not only in pre-compulsory settings, but also in the wider societies of Spain and England. In turn, my study has the potential to contribute to this gap in the literature. After defining my understanding of culture, I introduce some frameworks that have

been employed to research children, childhoods and child-rearing with the aim of becoming better informed about cultural differences and similarities.

### **Defining culture**

Harkness and Super (1999) state that culture ‘may be the most controverted of any basic construct in the social sciences’ (p.68). Equally, Ang (2009, 2010) observes that the term is notoriously ambiguous. Notwithstanding these cautions, I now provide a working definition of this concept to show what I understand by culture. To do so, I began by drawing upon Alexander’s (2001) basic notion of culture as ‘...the web of inherited ideas and values, habits and customs, institutions and world views which make one country, or one region or one group distinct from another’ (p.5). Considering this definition to be too basic I delved further into the literature to allow me to formulate a more detailed understanding of this concept in relation to the practice of child-rearing.

Weisner (2002) proposes that children follow developmental pathways which comprise routines, and are made up of cultural activities such as bedtime, watching TV etc. These, in turn, are fruitful units for cultural analysis, as they bring together the important aspects of culture. Nevertheless, he does emphasise that the extent to which the underpinning beliefs and values of these cultural activities are shared may vary at the level of family, community, ethnic group and nation.

Although not specifically referring to Homi Bhabba (2009), Gutiérrez (2002) suggests that one solution to ‘moving away from either-or-dichotomies to explain cultural variation is to focus on the inherent hybridity of cultural activity’ (p.316). Bhabba (2009), in discussing his theory of a third or *liminal* space, draws upon the

phrase ‘cultures-in-between’ to describe the diversity and complexity of cultural identities and communities. In doing so, he argues that culture is not just a series of pre-determined cultural norms. Alternatively, culture represents a diverse set of values and practices, as well as the social processes through which various cultures interact, connect and evolve. Consequently, cultures are heterogeneous rather than homogeneous.

For Lubeck (1985) [Culture] ‘is the pattern of organizations that hold diverse people together and the system of beliefs and meanings to which the group subscribes’ (p.7). She suggests how comparing child-rearing across cultural groups has sometimes involved focusing on similarities, and in other instances has been concerned with highlighting differences. Thus, this allows a consideration of both universal practices, and those that are particular to certain communities.

In summary, there are several issues that emerge from my endeavour to define culture especially within the context of child-rearing. Whilst Alexander’s basic notion of culture still remains to be useful, there is a need to recognise the tensions that surround the difficulties in defining culture as a single characteristic of a society. Likewise, when considering the values associated with child development it is also important to take into account the merging of both traditional and modern values, indigenous and imported ones, as well as those which are national and local (Woodhead, 1998). Clearly, a key challenge is how to understand both homogeneity and heterogeneity of beliefs in a given cultural community (Harwood, Schölmerich and Schulze, 2000).

Notwithstanding these challenges, Weisner (2003) poses the question ‘What is the single most important thing that one could do to influence the development of [an] infant?’ In responding, he suggests that this would be to decide the human

community where the child will grow up, the set of developmental pathways that this child will follow, and the activities and relationships that will surround the child (pp.xiv-xv). As discussed in this next section, cultural belief systems form part of these human communities.

### **Cultural belief systems about child-rearing**

Cultural belief systems about child-rearing are usefully defined as a set of personal perceptions that parents and other caregivers hold about the nature of children and their development, and how they function in social groups such as the peer group, the family, the community and society at large. These belief systems incorporate the values and norms relevant to children's personal and social development, and related methods that are employed to socialize these values and norms (Harkness and Super, 1999; Pope Edwards *et al.*, 2005; Huijbregts, Leseman and Tavecchio, 2008).

Although many studies have demonstrated that cultural belief systems on child-rearing do differ between cultural communities (LeVine 2003; Rubin and Chung, 2006; Suizzo 2007; Cheah and Chirkov, 2008; Penderi and Petrogiannis, 2011) these have predominantly focused upon parental beliefs. For example, Cheah and Chirkov (2008) explored Aboriginal- and Euro-Canadian mothers' personal and cultural beliefs regarding young children and also questioned why their socialization goals were important. LeVine (2003) researched the Gusii of Kenya discovering the high premium assigned by the mothers to nurturance as opposed to entering into play episodes with their children. Suizzo (2007) explored parents' long term goals and values across four ethnic groups in the United States, finding dimensions of both independence and interdependence within their cultural

models. Penderi and Petrogiannis (2011) investigated the cultural construction of the social and cognitive developmental processes held by mothers from two Roma urban communities in Greece. Nevertheless, whilst focusing solely on parental beliefs, in relation to child-rearing choices, may be illuminating it may not adequately explain wider societal views regarding children.

Huijbregts *et al.*, (2008), drawing upon the work of Harkness and Super (1999, 2006), suggested that the personal child-rearing beliefs of caregivers can be linked to two interrelated sources: 'everyday personal experiences with child-rearing in particular contexts, and socially shared cultural beliefs on child-rearing within particular communities' (p.234). Their Holland based study compared caregivers with different cultural backgrounds within one society and one daycare system. In doing so, Huijbregts *et al.* highlighted the interplay between general child-rearing beliefs and daycare specific child-rearing beliefs. They also drew attention to the implications for reconciling beliefs on child development and child-rearing in settings that accommodate culturally diverse staff and children. In a similar study based in Singapore, Ebbeck and Gokhale (2004) investigated to what extent parents' views, in relation to their children's learning and development, were congruent with those of the childcare centres that their children attended. They concluded that practices in the home and childcare environments varied, especially in terms of behaviour management and self-help skills. The authors suggested that teachers and parents need to work together to build up a common understanding of what is best for the child.

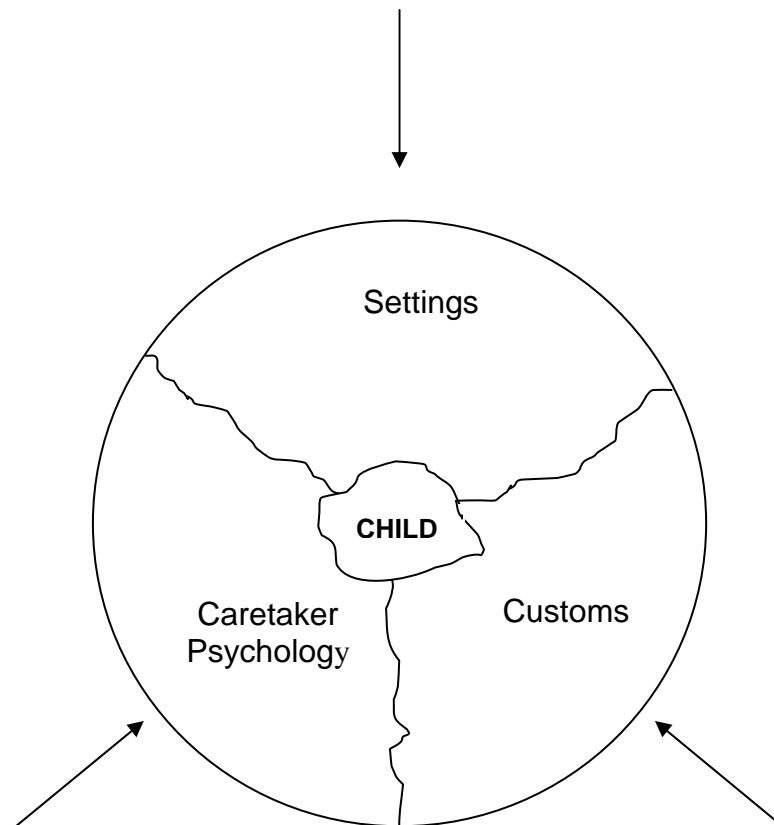
Consequently, such studies are useful in revealing differences in practitioners' thinking in relation to child-rearing beliefs, the nature of children, the organisation of children in settings and the perceived values and norms of children's



development especially in comparison to those of the families that use their settings.

### **The Developmental Niche Framework**

Super and Harkness (1986) proposed that cross-cultural differences in parenting are a result of adult beliefs about the nature of children and about the world in general. In turn, they have formulated a framework entitled the 'developmental niche' for examining the cultural structuring of child development. This is presented as a theoretical framework to link three underpinning fields of early childhood development; anthropology, parenting and psychology (Nsamenang, 2006). Super and Harkness' (1986) 'developmental niche' has three components: the physical and social settings in which the child lives; the culturally regulated customs of child care and child-rearing; and the psychology of the caretakers, including their ethnotheories or cultural belief systems (p.552). As can be seen in Figure 4.1, these three components, although being embedded in the larger culture, operate together as a system (Harkness and Super, 2006).



**Figure 4.1: Diagram of Developmental Niche**  
**Source: Adapted from Harkness and Super (2006)**

This framework usefully enables, as suggested by Kessen (1983), the object of study to be the child in context as opposed to ‘the child’. Similarly, Gaskins (1999) proposed that a dual research agenda is required to understand the process of development. On one hand, this involves studying children engaged in daily activities; ‘the unit of child-in-activity-in-context’ (p.27) and on the other hand studying the cultural belief systems and institutions that underpin children’s everyday contexts of behaviour. Drawing upon Super and Harkness (1991), Gillen *et al.* (2007) and Gillen and Cameron (2010) suggested that culture would be manifested in parent-child interactions through the duality of the ‘direct expression of parental values and beliefs’ and the ‘less intentional structuring of

the child's developmental niche by the physical and social resources for caretaking' (p.209). Their resulting video data of the 'day in the life' of a two-and-a-half-year-old girl in six global communities (Peru, Italy, Canada, Thailand and the United Kingdom) confirmed this assertion. Additionally, the researchers' interpretations of and provisional understandings of these data were enhanced by the discussion that followed between local investigators and the child's family.

As Woodhead (1998) remarked, the idea of the developmental niche has been more commonly applied by Western early childhood researchers to practices and belief systems in rural Kenya, India or Latin America as opposed to Western childhoods. However, there have been exceptions. Rosenthal and Roer-Strier (2001), explored the ethnotheories of two sets of mothers living in Israel; one group who were Israeli-born and the other group Soviet-born. Pope Edwards *et al.* (2005) have investigated parental ethnotheories in four communities comprising Norway, Nebraska, Turkey and North Korea. Harkness and Super (2006) have compared parental ethnotheories in Holland and America. These studies have been revealing in terms of the relative importance that parents assign to their children's place in society and to their children's individual development.

Ethnotheories are defined by Harkness and Super (2006) as: '...cultural models that [caretakers] hold regarding children, families, and themselves as parents' (p.62). They define 'cultural models' as '...an organized set of ideas that are shared by members of a cultural group' that are... 'implicit' or 'taken-for-granted ideas' about the '...right way to think or act' (p.62). The caretakers' (parents, teachers and child care workers) ethnotheories may originate from a broad range of cultural sources which may include the media, reflection on the past, and both formal and informal advice sources (Harkness and Super, 1999). As well as being

studied directly, ethnotheories, can be studied through the first two components of the developmental niche – the settings and customs. Thus, it is the relationship between ideas and goals for action that link the three components of the developmental niche together.

In relation to the physical and social settings, Whiting (1980) suggested that culture influences child development through the settings of daily life. Thus, the people, for example caretakers and others around them, who occupy these settings, determine the type of interactions that children experience and practice. Additionally, societal institutions such as schools determine the age and sex of children's companions and the kinds of social interactions experienced. Drawing upon their research in Kokwet in Kenya, and comparing this to urban America, Super and Harkness (1986) demonstrated the differences in relationships between the children's everyday settings and child development. They give examples of varying sleep patterns, gender and age segregation between the two groups and also differences in the time allocated to work and play. Consequently, they suggested that the settings' structures are influential in dictating the types of social interactions that occur, alongside the people who are present.

With regard to the customs of child care, Super and Harkness (1986) proposed that all aspects of the physical setting are underpinned by 'cultural adaptations in child care practices' (p.555). On a practical level, they suggested that the presence of dangerous objects albeit deep water or staircases will determine the caretakers' levels of care and supervision. Thus, the customs of child care are adapted by the parents and caretakers to the ecological and cultural settings in which they live. Nevertheless, Super and Harkness view these customs as being embedded in the larger structure of cultural relations as opposed to being the product of individual

choice or personal disposition. Consequently, these ‘...customs of child care can be seen as behavioural strategies for dealing with children of particular ages, in the context of particular environmental constraints’ (p.555).

In discussing the final component of the ‘developmental niche’; the psychology of the caretakers, Super and Harkness (1986) emphasised that, although most child-rearing customs are not critically examined, they may be accompanied by certain beliefs and values about their significance. Thus, they view the psychology of caretakers as including ‘ethnotheories of child behaviour and development’ and ‘learned affective orientations which parents bring to their experience of parenting’ (p.556). These ethnotheories incorporate beliefs relating to ‘the nature and needs of children, parental and community goals for rearing, and caretaker beliefs about effective rearing techniques’ (p.556). Harkness and Super (2006) stressed that the study of parental ethnotheories necessitates a comparative cross-cultural perspective to ensure that patterns of belief and practice that are both shared and culture-specific are made apparent, which may escape notice in a flat, monocultural perspective.

Although the development niche has predominantly been utilised to examine the child-rearing beliefs and practices of parents, its use has been extended to also investigate the cultural belief systems of teachers. In exploring teachers’ cultural ideas, or ethnotheories of the ideal student in five Western societies – Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United States, teachers were interviewed about their beliefs and practices related to children’s development and learning in school. The study, undertaken by Harkness *et al.* (2007), indicated that independence or autonomy were valued qualities mentioned in all the groups apart from Spain. The responses from the Spanish teachers appeared to be underpinned

by two models – a traditional approach and a new model; the first model focuses on obedience, effort and memorization whereas the latter one emphasises motivation, learning by discovery and through play, and working in groups. In turn, as suggested by Harkness *et al.* (2007), if school is a key place for learning how to be a competent member of society, it would appear to have the potential to help us to become better informed about the ‘...beliefs and values that shape the larger culture’ (p.132). Thus, coupled with observing or noting descriptions of customs of care, exploring the everyday practices and social interaction processes within formal sites such as early years settings has the potential to ‘...provide a window into cultural beliefs’ (Harkness and Super, 2006, p. 73) about the social and educational goals valued by societies (Rosenthal, 2003).

Studies undertaken by Kağıtçıbaşı (1996) and Rosenthal (1999) have looked at the parenting role as a way of preparing children for their social roles as adults within different cultures. In turn, researchers have investigated the desired aspirations and attributes of parents for their children in contrasting cultures. They have linked these to the ethnotheories of child development which are reflective of the models of child-rearing valued by the society in which this takes place (Rosenthal and Roer-Strier, 2001). Focusing on five communities in Israel, Rosenthal and Roer-Strier (2006) found a strong similarity between the themes mothers chose to describe the valued characteristics in their young children and their long-term developmental goals for them. They usefully identified four key themes from the mothers’ descriptions of characteristics as their children-as-adults; self, inter-personal relations, family-context and societal context (p.522).

As with Super and Harkness’ (1986) central dimensions of child-rearing, identified through general traits such as obedience, responsibility, nurturing,

achievement, self-reliance and independence, these themes may be present in all societies. However, the extent to which they are emphasised and achieved will vary from society to society (Ebbeck and Gokhale, 2004). Thus, discovering the presence of these traits and themes, and exploring the relative importance given to them clearly has the potential to compare the value attached to them in the two contrasting societies of Spain and England. Consequently, the developmental niche will be used as an underpinning framework for my own investigation in the pre-compulsory early years settings to identify practitioners' beliefs and values about children that are observable in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices.

#### **4.7 Summary**

In this chapter I have reflected upon past childhoods and examined the historically grounded Dionysian and Apollonian models of childhoods. These models are still likely to be visible in the present day societies under investigation. With this in mind, I have highlighted some issues that are evident in the discussion of contemporary childhoods, and have given due attention to a widely-used theory for understanding different childhoods; social constructionism.

Following on from this I discussed the constructs of individualism and collectivism, whilst cautioning against assigning societies or cultures to either one or the other. I then considered intergenerational relations between children and adults, and went on to highlight some of the factors that may create barriers to fostering positive ones. As emphasised, a breakdown in these relationships may have implications for the social location of children.

As I explained in Chapter 1 large-scale reports that compare and discuss the state of contemporary childhoods have helped to pave the way for my own research. Whilst recognising that there are few recent small-scale studies that have compared Spain with the UK, I have looked at a range of comparative studies that have focused on the cultural differences in the field of early childhood. These studies have provided me with a context in which to situate my own study. Before identifying some frameworks that have been used to understand cultural differences, I presented my working definition of culture. Finally, I discussed cultural belief systems and introduced the concept of the developmental niche which has been used to underpin the first part of my study in the pre-compulsory early years settings.

Pertinent to Yin's (2003) observation that a literature review is most useful as a 'means to an end' rather than 'an end in itself', this endeavour has certainly not answered all that is known on this topic, but has helped me to construct many insightful questions that I can ask about the cultural differences that underpin attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain. In turn, undertaking this review has presented me with a preliminary framework in which to look at how pre-compulsory settings in Murcia and Kent '...reflect and pass on cultural values while at the same time respond to changing social pressures, and expectations for what children should learn, do and be' [in the wider societies] (Tobin *et al.*, 2009, p.1). This framework will be used to explore if there is a connection between what is happening in the Murcian and Kent pre-compulsory settings and what is happening in the wider society (Tobin *et al.*, 2009) and will be guided by the following three research questions:



- Are there any differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings in Murcia, Spain and in Kent, England?
- Do identified patterns of interactions in early years settings, and practitioners' beliefs and values about children and child-rearing reflect the social location of young children within the cultures investigated?
- Are any differences identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and of childhood?

Based on the research reviewed, it appears to be a reasonable assumption that individuals and collectives, in socially constructing variable images of childhood, will form expectations of how young children are likely to behave and what aspects of this behaviour are valued, and should be nurtured or deterred. Potential themes, arising from this review, to be investigated in the settings, have been identified. These themes include the interactions evidenced between adults and children, the level of affective identification; including the presence of touching behaviours, and the relative importance given to these. Another salient theme is the relative emphasis assigned to promoting children's independence and autonomy, and how this may manifest itself in terms of the protection, the degree of freedom and liberty, and the level of choice given to children. Likewise, these values may also become apparent in the endorsement of individuality or the encouragement of associative behaviour. Inevitably, these themes may underpin the favoured strategies of behaviour management in accordance with social norms.

In conclusion, this literature review has been useful in helping me to identify a combination of theoretical frameworks comprising social constructionism

incorporating cultural expectations and consequences; intergenerational relationships and the concept of the developmental niche which will help me to address the aforementioned research questions. As I explain in the next chapter, the combination of asking adults about what they think of children as well as observing their behaviour towards children will help to highlight any conflict between attitudes or rhetoric, and actual behaviour.

## **Chapter 5: Methodology and Methods:**

### **The research questions, strategies of inquiry, methods of data collection and data analysis**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I begin by reiterating the questions that guided my research study. I then consider the underpinning philosophical framework adopted in terms of its characteristics, strengths and limitations, including a discussion of why a qualitative approach was taken. The relationships between the underpinning epistemological and ontological assumptions, the methodological implications of these and my role as the researcher are then examined. These relationships are explored in relation to how they guided my strategies of inquiry (Creswell, 2003) and my chosen methods of data collection and analysis. I also discuss the process of gaining access to the case study settings, the embedded ethical issues, and how I analysed and interpreted the data.

#### **5.1 The Research Questions**

As highlighted in Chapter 1, a central aim of my research was to explore my ‘hunch’ that there may be cultural and structural differences in how adults in Spain and England think about or conceptualise young children. In turn, I wanted to investigate if there was any variability in the beliefs, values, and practices between the two cultures, and how these informed both individual and societal attitudes towards the place of young children. The selected topic was one that I had a genuine interest in but this needed to be refined into what Brewer (2007) describes as ‘...viable, manageable and useful research question[s]’ (p.48).

My research questions were developed alongside the literature review (see Chapter 4), the two documentary reviews (see Chapters 2 and 3) and also by drawing upon my own experiences of working in early years settings, and spending time in public places with young children in the two countries. In adopting a qualitative research perspective, as Mason (2004) suggests, my questions became devices that helped to guide and focus my enquiry, rather than presenting me with puzzles with ‘fixed solutions’. For the first part of the study I began my research at the micro-level to explore if there were any differences in how early years practitioners viewed and implemented their child-rearing practices. Realising the enormity of problems associated with regarding nation states as basic units of analysis and comparison (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008) I focused on one region of Spain and one county in England. Thus I conducted a comparative multiple-case study of pre-compulsory early years settings in Murcia, Spain and in Kent, England. Guided by a qualitative interpretive paradigm, and also the idea that notions of children and childhood are socially and culturally constructed the following two research questions were devised to help me to understand what was happening in the settings:

- Are there any differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings in (Murcia) Spain and (Kent) England?
- Do identified patterns of interactions in these early years settings, and practitioners’ beliefs and values about children and child-rearing reflect the social location of young children within the cultures investigated?

In the second part of the fieldwork research, I investigated whether any of the differences identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings were reflected in

broader social attitudes towards children and childhood. This task involved seeking the views of adults who regularly negotiate the place of young children in public spaces. Whilst recognising the extent to which case studies are able to reveal these links, this part of the research was underpinned by the following question:

- Are any differences identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood?

## **5.2 The Ontological and Epistemological Framework**

Epistemological beliefs about what can be known are intrinsically linked with ontological beliefs about what exists, about the nature of the world and about what ‘reality’ is. Punch (2003) usefully differentiates between the two philosophical concepts of ontology and epistemology suggesting that:

Ontology refers to what exists in the world, to the nature of reality: what is the form and nature of reality? Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge claims, and to the question of what counts as knowledge: what is the relationship between the knower and the known? (p.170)

Interpretations of what is meant by ‘reality’, and the value and purposes of research to investigate reality have fuelled exhaustive academic debate. A positivist empiricist epistemology that claims that there is a single, rational truth to be known that is generalisable, frequently predictive and has a universal rather than embedded rationality tends to generate research that emphasises the determinacy of knowledge. As Hoffman (2003) advises ‘what constitutes “normal” child behaviour and “good parenting” may be reflective of white middle class American childhood ideologies but these may ‘appear strange and even anti-

child in many parts of the world' (p.209). In describing childhood, 'as distinct from biological immaturity', James and Prout (2008) see it as 'neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but...as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies' (p.8). In accordance with these views, I adopted a social constructionist standpoint to begin to understand and interpret the value and place of children in the two cultures and societies of Spain and England. In turn, my epistemological and ontological position acknowledges the multiple ways that childhoods are socially constructed and reconstructed in respect of factors such as time and place, social class, gender, age and ethnicity (Woodhead, 2004).

### **An interpretive framework**

An interpretive paradigm highlights the situated, contextual nature of 'reality' and 'knowledge' and recognises that any research, through the formulation of questions, design, data collection, analysis and write-up, is as much about my own beliefs and value systems as a researcher as it is about the issues and people studied. Blaikie (2000) suggests that:

Interpretivists are concerned with understanding the social world people have produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities. This everyday reality consists of the meanings and interpretations given by the social actors to their actions, other people's actions, social situations, and natural and humanly created objects. In short, in order to negotiate their way around their world and make sense of it, social actors have to interpret their activities together, and it is these meanings, embedded in language, that constitute their social reality (p.115).

An interpretive paradigm requires that both the actions of those being researched and of those conducting the research must be understood and made apparent. Therefore, as a researcher, I needed to be aware of my pre-understandings. Rather than trying to 'bracket' these understandings, they were used as a starting point for acquiring further situated knowledge. Consequently, within this interpretive paradigm, my chosen methods of data collection were not value-free or independent of interpretations. My task as an interpretivist researcher was to try '...to understand the socially constructed, negotiated and shared meanings' of my research participants '...and re-present them as theories of human behaviour' (Hughes, 2001, p.36). In turn, my goal was to formulate a pattern of analysis that made sense of human actions within the context of a given place and time (Fife, 1997).

### **5.3 The Methodological Approach: a qualitative one**

In relation to selecting a methodological approach, to help me address my questions, Creswell (2003) suggests that:

The knowledge claims, the strategies and the method all contribute to a research proposal that tends to be more quantitative, qualitative or mixed (p.18).

To identify the most appropriate means to answer my research questions I consulted the abundance of academic texts that compare and contrast the benefits and limitations of the aforementioned approaches (Silverman, 2000; Bryman, 2001; MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford, 2001; Creswell, 2003; Punch, 2003). I decided to investigate the research topic using a qualitative approach and to make use of methods comprising documentary reviews, interviews and

observations. Selecting a qualitative approach was useful in studying a limited number of cases in depth, to explore their differences and nuances, and also allowed me to describe the data collected in rich detail. Most importantly, the data resulting from this approach were based upon participants' own categories of meaning. These data allowed participants' personal experiences and viewpoints to come to the fore, alongside their actual behaviour. A qualitative approach enabled these to be described as they occurred in their local contexts, was responsive to local situations and conditions, and allowed me to conduct cross-case comparisons.

This approach had the advantage of enabling me to maintain a sharp focus on the micro-cultures of the early years settings whilst also retaining a wider perspective on the institutional, social and cultural contexts in which they were situated. A qualitative approach provided a platform for the observations and perspectives of the adults in early years settings, who spend time with and work with young children on a daily basis, and for those of the adults who regularly negotiate the place of young children, in public spaces such as restaurants, hotels and shopping centres, to be noted. This approach also allowed the interviewees to express their individual beliefs and views. Within this qualitative framework, I adopted a naturalistic, multiple-site case study approach, using ethnographic case studies of individual pre-compulsory early years settings in order to become aware of the adults' and children's experiences within them and of individual participants' interpretations of the events observed.



## 5.4 Strategies of inquiry

### An ethnographic approach

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) define ethnography 'in its most characteristic form' as involving the 'ethnographer participating...in people's daily lives, for an extended period of time, watching what is said, asking questions - in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research' (p.1).

Mason (2004) suggests that as ethnographic approaches encompass such a range of perspectives and activities the idea of adhering to *an* ethnographic position, as though there were only one, is faintly ridiculous (p.55). Nevertheless, as Atkinson *et al.*, (2001) explain, ethnographic approaches do share common features in that they are grounded in first-hand experience of a particular social or cultural setting, and characteristic features of the ethnographic approach are observation and participation. Walford draws upon a statement from Bryman (2001) that eclipses five key features of ethnography:

Ethnographers immerse themselves in a society; to collect descriptive data via fieldwork; concerning the culture of its members; from the perspective meanings members of that society attach to their social world; and render the collected data intelligible and significant to fellow academics and other readers.

Troman *et al.*, (2006) have listed seven similar key elements of ethnography as applied to the study of educational contexts. Walford takes these elements and discusses them in relation to what he refers to as the minimum requirements for a research project to be called ethnographic. In Walford's terms I considered my study to be ethnographic as I studied the details of everyday lives of the

participants within two selected localities, in their cultural contexts, to understand their beliefs and values. As Mason (2004) emphasises, this endeavour allowed me to see the people and their interpretations, meanings and understandings as the primary data sources. Additionally, I used multiple methods and considered diverse forms of data. I was directly involved in the fieldwork settings, building up relationships with the participants over an extended time. Likewise, I was the main research instrument and therefore had to be aware of my own values and assumptions. Throughout the research I assigned a high status to the participants' knowledge, perspectives and understanding. Importantly, as I accumulated data, I remained committed to modifying my existing hypotheses and theories. Finally, adopting an ethnographic approach enabled me to focus on my cases in depth but also allowed scope for theoretical generalisation.

Genzuk (2003) states that, the extent of participation can be seen as a continuum varying from complete immersion to complete separation. As Mason (2004) points out, interpretivists do not have to, 'rely upon "total immersion in a setting" and can...happily support a study which uses interview methods, for example, where the aim is to explore people's individual and collective understandings...' (p.56). Thus, in both parts of my study I combined participation and observation, and made use of interviews, observations and documents believing them to be key ways of generating knowledge without relying upon total immersion in the settings.

### **The Reflexive Ethnographer**

Reflexivity implies that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them. What this represents is a

rejection of the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the particular biography of the researcher...(Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.16).

Recognising that ethnographic research evidence is derived mainly from the researcher's personal experiences of contexts and participants, assigned a certain amount of responsibility to my role as researcher. Adopting a reflexive stance enabled me to consider how my social, political and personal beliefs were reflected in the research aims, process and findings. As Kuhn (1970) points out, researchers have inescapable personal histories shaped by cultures, values, discourses and social structures. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) also emphasise the impact of the personal biography of the researcher throughout the qualitative research process in the following statement:

The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)...the researcher collects empirical materials bearing on the question and then analyzes and writes about them. Every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multi-cultural, gendered components of the research act (p.18).

The analysis of my diary entries, and practitioner and parent/carer interviews, revealed issues linked to factors of identity such as gender in my data collection and analysis. Consequently, I reflected on how my own gender, class, profession and experiences impacted upon the whole research process and also contributed to my 'researcher identity' as the 'essential research instrument' (LeCompte and

Preissle, 1993, pp.91-92). In particular, Pink (2001) draws attention to the necessity of ethnographer reflexivity with regard to the written word:

It is usually now taken for granted that ethnographic texts cannot communicate the 'truth' about any one culture or society, but are inevitably, like any other visual or verbal narrative or image, representations (p.121).

Acknowledging the existence of a multiplicity of interpretations as opposed to one 'truth' was also applied to my own role as a researcher. Consequently, making use of research diaries, and including extracts from these in the writing-up of the thesis, helped to make my own subjectivity and values visible. The credibility of ethnographic research also rests on the robustness of the conclusions and the transparency of the criteria for data collection. Therefore, I explain why certain choices have been made and leave a clear 'data trail' and 'maintain a chain of evidence' (Yin, 2003). This open account demonstrated my recognition of the ethnographer as part of the world being studied.

It was important that I recognised the influence of the decisions I made throughout the research process, for example, in relation to how I gained access to the case study settings, by reflecting on my decision to stop observing participants, for instance, when using the video camera and making written observations, or when making the decision not to transcribe or present certain data. These decisions also needed to be linked to my personal understandings of privacy and respect, and their relation to any ethical decisions that I made as a researcher.

Underpinning my role as researcher is the 'ethnographic self' (Coffey, 1999) as early years practitioner, teacher, ex-inspector, parent, a person who is at ease with

both the cultures of Spain and England – but more experienced with and better informed about the latter culture. As a British person with a Spanish name, who resides in England but has spent extended time in Spain, I was in a position to draw upon Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity to engage a 'third space' to undertake this research. As Hoogvelt (1997) suggests, doing so gave me an advantage of in-betweenness, a means of straddling the two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate any differences. Thus, I took on the role of cultural interpreter, with the aim of contextualising my comparative research study within the two countries' cultures, social and political interactions, their taboos and customs. The detailed reflection of my self-identity that follows contributes to rendering this transparent, and emphasises my role as part of the research context (Fleer, Hedegaard and Tudge, 2009).

### **My Self-Identity**

We do not come to a setting without an identity, constructed and shaped by complex social processes. We bring to a setting disciplinary knowledge and theoretical frameworks. We also bring a self, which is, among other things, gendered, sexual, occupational, generational – located in time and space (Coffey, 1999, p.158).

Coffey's (1999) suggestion that self-identity is linked to self-appearance and the social relations of the field, and that these not only highlight the concepts of familiarity and strangeness but complicate the differentiation between the two, is a point that I related to. To be able to carry out this comparative research in two countries I worked hard to distance myself from the early years care and education structure in England that I am familiar with to become better acquainted with the less familiar early years care and education structure in Spain.

The adage ‘Making the familiar strange and the strange familiar’ became relevant to my identity as a researcher whilst spending time in settings that were ‘familiar’ to me and in settings that were ‘strange’ to me. As Coffey (1999) emphasises, ‘The balance between strangeness and familiarity...is not an easily negotiated, emotional balance – between seeking an identity and losing an identity’ (p.35). David (1998b), in reflecting on her experiences of visiting early years provision in other countries, emphasises the need to ‘get out of one’s own shoes’ if one wants to understand what is happening and why. At the same time she suggests that visiting these settings have taught her about the many assumptions one makes about one’s own country. In her words, ‘Beginning to “see” through the eyes of another makes the previously “invisible” visible’ (p.7).

### **My identity as an early years practitioner**

I have worked in a variety of early years settings in England over many years. For me, these are familiar environments in which I feel I can relate positively to other early years practitioners with whom I have a common identity. I have expectations of the types of activities and resources that I am likely to find in these settings. Additionally, I am knowledgeable on the early years framework in England that practitioners use to plan and guide their everyday practice.

On the other hand, I was less familiar with early years settings in Spain. I had previously made brief visits to several of them but their structure and organisation remained largely strange to me. I was unsure what to expect when I went into the settings and I was less familiar with their early years curriculum, and the resulting activities and resources. Nevertheless, my identity as an early years practitioner gave me a common understanding with both English and Spanish early years

practitioners, who work in predominantly female professional environments. In turn, I used this common ground during the time spent in my early years fieldwork sites to establish positive social relationships and to share experiences with the people there.

### **My identity as an early years theorist**

Inevitably, my identity as an early years theorist is related to my identity as an early years practitioner especially in relation to my view of childhood. My personal view of childhood is that it is socially and culturally constructed, and dependent on what and how children are expected to 'be' in different societies. Consequently, 'age' can be used to exclude children from certain spaces and may limit their activities. In terms of the underpinning framework that guides my practical and theoretical work I have moved from predominantly drawing upon a Piagetian developmentalist view (a product of my child care and education training in the 1970s and 1980s). My perspective on how children grow, develop and learn is now informed by an evolving sociocultural stance (Göncü, Özer and Ahioğlu, 2009). This viewpoint is influenced by the work of Vygotsky that views the 'child in context' (Donaldson, 1978; Anning, Cullen and Flear, 2004; Yelland 2005; Flear, 2006) and recognises the influence of culturally situated child-rearing practices in homes and communities. It also acknowledges the importance of social and cultural practices and beliefs in contributing to children's relationships and adaptation (Rogoff, 2003; LeVine, 2003). Consequently, in addition to the 'individually developing child', I see children as competent social actors and as active agents in the midst of social and cultural networks (Christensen and James, 2000; Fraser *et al.*, 2004; Lewis *et al.*, 2004). I also believe that early years

settings are institutions that reflect and support the cultures of which they are a part (Tobin, Wu and Davidson, 1989; Rayna, 2004; Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa, 2009).

### **My identity as a person who negotiates the place of children in the wider environment**

In addition to being a participant and observer of intergenerational relationships on a daily basis in the wider environment, I have worked in a variety of public places, such as hotels and shops in both England and in Spain. As a result of this, I brought to my research preconceptions of how children may be treated in these social settings and what their place can be in these public areas. These became visible in my notion that children's presence may be more socially acceptable in intergenerational spaces in Spain than in England.

### **My identity as a researcher**

Spending time in early settings as a researcher, and not as a practitioner, required reflecting on the implications of adopting this alternative role. This often involved 'stepping back' and resisting the temptation to discipline children and becoming accustomed to referring children to a practitioner if they asked for my permission to do something. Having previously worked as an inspector, I had to avoid being judgemental of the practices in the settings and avoid searching for or trying to identify 'quality care and education'. Outside of the fieldwork settings, I operate within a community of national and international researchers and within a framework of the respective conventions of current research and ethical practices.



**My identity as a non-researcher**

My identity as a non-researcher involves being a mother, woman, wife, daughter, sister and child; all underpinned by my race, social class, sexuality and religious heritage. These identities impact on the way I approached this research. I have experienced a variety of early years settings and schools, as a mother, when my two daughters attended and also took on the roles of 'parent helper' and 'parent governor'. Outside of the formal settings, I have experienced life in England and Spain as the mother of young children. Memories of the differing 'welcomes' and 'reactions' I received as a mother of these young children in a variety of public spaces also underpins my research.

**My identity as a native and as a foreigner**

I was born, and spent my childhood in England, and have a British passport. My training as an early years practitioner was undertaken in England. However, I married someone of Spanish descent and now have a Spanish surname. People in England ask if I am Spanish when they hear my name. I have worked and lived in, and frequently visit Spain, and speak Spanish. Therefore, I am familiar with the cultures of both Spain and England. However, when I am in Spain, I am often referred to as '*La inglesa*' – because I speak Spanish with an accent and live in England. Thus, when in Spain I am sometimes viewed as a foreigner. Yet, having links with the two countries and knowledge of the two languages, placed me in a privileged position to be able to compare the two selected areas in England and Spain. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008) discuss the relationship between the researcher and the researched within the 'crux of comparative and international inquiry' (p. 53). Using their matrix based on their continua of 'familiar and

unfamiliar contexts’, and ‘similar and different from home culture’, confirmed my advantaged position.

### **5.5 The Intellectual Puzzle: a comparative one**

As suggested by Mason (2004), ‘Intellectual puzzles can and do take a variety of forms connected to the ontological and epistemological positions encapsulated in the research’ (p.18). My intellectual puzzle was compatible with Mason’s description of a ‘comparative puzzle’ and was based on what can be learnt from comparing x and y, and how the differences and explanations between them can be explained within a cross-cultural research context.

#### **Comparative education and cross-cultural research**

Historically, comparative education has evolved through several stages. *Travellers’ tales* involved recounting and sharing of cultural practices, customs and educational practices. *Educational borrowing* entailed educators observing foreign educational systems to identify alternative approaches to education that could be imported to their own countries (Noah and Eckstein, 1998). Sadler’s (1900) caution that education systems are not readily detachable still appears to hold true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, what works in one country may not work in another.

There is a consensus of opinion that comparative education does not constitute a single discipline (Bereday, 1964; Crossley and Watson, 2003; Kubow and Fossum, 2007). Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008) describe comparative education as a ‘quasi-discipline’ in which it plays ‘an important role...in studies that are firmly rooted in disciplines...to studies of a cross-disciplinary nature...such as

early childhood learning' (p.13). I exploited this multi-disciplinary nature (Crossley, 2000) to draw upon the disciplines of psychology, sociology, history and anthropology for my own comparative investigation.

In this excerpt from his lecture in 1900, Sadler usefully emphasised the importance of context:

In studying foreign systems of Education we should not forget that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside...A national system of Education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties, and 'of battles long ago'. It has in it some of the secret workings of national life (Sadler, 1979 [1900], p.49).

Consequently, when undertaking a comparative study, it is important to recognise that the culture in which the setting is located is a powerful determinant of the character of life in the setting (Broadfoot, 1999; Alexander, 1999). Alexander proposes that, 'any one school or classroom can tell us a great deal about the country and education system of which it is a part', if the selected research methods are 'sufficiently searching' (p.158). Hence, a fine-grained ethnographic study of a few settings is 'generalisable culturally' and has the advantage of the 'intensity of analysis'.

In Chapter 3, I included information on the national and local structures to provide a contextual framework in which to locate the pre-compulsory settings. Bray and Thomas (1995) refer to the micro-level analysis as the 'lower' level in their 'framework for comparative analyses'. To avoid neglecting this micro-level of analysis my units of analysis were the pre-compulsory early settings, the child-rearing beliefs and values of the adults who worked with the children and their respective practices. In the second part of the study the units of analysis were the

public spaces, comprising hotels, restaurants and shopping centres, and the views of the adults who regularly negotiate the use of these spaces.

The purpose of my study was predominantly as an aid to critical thinking. As highlighted in an OECD (2006) report, the aim of my study was ‘...not to identify “models” for imitation...’ (p.190). However, I was aware that the comparative aspect of my research may reveal alternative ways of thinking about children, childhood and child-rearing. This view is compatible with Moss (2001), who suggests that comparative research provides a prism or lens to identify the unquestioned assumptions, discourses and practices of one’s own country. Likewise, Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008) in discussing the purposes of comparative inquiry propose that, ‘learning from the experiences of others’ would be rated highly. Additionally, comparative research, such as that of Tobin *et al.*, (1989, 2009) can be useful in revealing how culturally determined beliefs and values, and goals are reflected in individual and societal definitions of childhood, and early childhood education and care.

Bereday (1964) uses the image of a mirror to suggest that how a country educates its children is revealing of the extent to which they are valued:

Education is a mirror held against the face of a people. Nations may put on blustering shows of strength to conceal political weakness, erect grand facades to conceal shabby backyards, and profess peace while secretly arming for conquest, but how they take care of their children tells us unerringly who they are (p. 5).

James and James (2004) similarly propose that:

...an analysis of social policies and practices in *any* state, whether it be religious or secular, will reveal the extent to which childhoods are,

and historically always have been, rooted in, constructed by, and experienced through the lens provided by the lens of a given society (p.104).

Thus looking at examples of education and care provision will provide a suitable lens through which wider [adult] conceptualizations of children can be considered. In particular, it is envisaged that my study will lead to increased understanding of how young children's experiences of pre-compulsory early years settings may be influenced by different social, cultural and national contexts. Similarly, highlighting any cultural differences in relation to childhoods in the two localities may lead to insights about whole societies.

In this study, it soon became apparent that I was not just studying English or Spanish attitudes to English children and Spanish children, or indeed Kentish or Murcian attitudes to Kentish children and Murcian children. Both the localities of Kent and Murcia have populations that also comprise ethnic and culturally diverse communities, and the implications of these factors are considered in both the data collection and analysis. Consequently, my research also has the potential to contribute to the implications of cross-cultural socialisation for those children who may have to adopt two different roles – one in the home environment and one in formal early learning environments.

## **5.6 The Use of Case Studies**

In using case studies, I was able to take an exploratory approach and also make use of inductive reasoning with the aim of developing theory from the data collected. As stated by Yin (2003) case studies are an appropriate approach for research that is exploratory and focused upon 'how' and 'why' questions.

Certainly for me, an advantage of using case studies is that they enabled me to ‘...retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events’ (Yin, 2003, p.3). The unit(s) of analysis, for the first part of the study, was a purposive sample of three early years settings in each of the two countries. This is compatible with Eisenhardt (2002) who recommends that, rather than prescribing an ideal or specific number, the researcher should explore between four and ten cases. Less than four may result in a lack of data, and more than ten may result in too much data.

On a personal and practical level, settings in Spain needed to be accessible from the Region of Murcia which I am familiar with in terms of local knowledge, and also where I had accommodation for the duration of the fieldwork. This choice of area within Spain also provided a starting point for selecting an area of England on which to focus. Although the difficulties of finding comparable areas not only within countries but also between countries are recognised, I began by looking for a second location with similar demographics to Murcia.

The two areas finally selected as the focus for the research were Murcia and Kent. These were chosen in terms of practical issues such as ease of access, geographic, economic and demographic factors. In 2009 The County of Kent had an estimated population of 1,411,100 (606,500 male and 724,500 female). Six per cent (84,500) of this total estimated population figure was aged 0–4 years (Kent County Council (KCC), 2010; Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2010c). The Region of Murcia had an estimated population of 1,446,520 (731,609 male and 714,911 female) with just over six per cent (90,288) of this total population being aged 0–4 years (Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), 2010; Centro Regional de Estadística de Murcia, (CREM) 2010a). Thus, apart from the difference in the

ratio of males to females in Kent and in Murcia, the 2009 estimated population figures for the two areas were similar.

Additionally, both areas place particular emphasis on their agricultural produce – Kent is known as the ‘Garden of England’ and Murcia is known as the ‘*Huerta de Espana*’ (Market Garden of Spain) and the ‘*Huerta de Europa*’ (Market Garden of Europe). Both the chosen localities have coastal areas, urban areas and semi-rural areas. Access was gained to an out-of-town setting, a coastal setting and a town/city setting in Murcia and in Kent to ensure that different infrastructures and socio-economic backgrounds were represented. This enabled comparisons to be made both within the country, for example to consider if the geographical location had any impact on the practices, and also between the countries. It is notable that the two town/city early years settings were situated in areas with high levels of local authority housing.

I spent 13 days over a period of three to four weeks (see Appendix A for dates of fieldwork visits) in each of the selected case study early years settings in Murcia and Kent. Data were collected using interviews, observations and documents. The resulting data allowed a comparative analysis of cases to identify both common and contrasting themes. I predicted that there would be more common themes within countries and further contrasting themes across countries.

### **Generalizability, Reliability, Validity and Ethnographical Case Studies**

As Yin (2003) suggests, case studies may be generalizable to theoretical propositions but not to populations and universes. Thus, the limitations of making generalisations from such a small-scale study are recognised. In particular, Spain comprises 17 autonomous communities and early years provision varies widely

not only in England but also within the wider context of the United Kingdom. Thus, I focused on individual cases in Murcia and Kent rather than attempting the impossible task of generalising between Spain and England. The cases were not chosen for their 'typicality' but it is acknowledged that the findings may be transferred and compared to similar cases, in similar settings (Seale, 1999). This was enabled by rich case description and cross case comparison with other work (Eisenhardt, 2002; Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2003). Chabbott and Elliott (2003) suggest that scholarly debates related to the validity, relevance and generalizability of findings of international comparative education studies emphasise the degree to which context has been recognised and accounted for. With this point in mind, I situated the six early years settings within the national and local early childhood care and education policies of the two chosen localities – Murcia and Kent.

Reliability is concerned with the issue of replicability. As I was primarily interested in research participants' interpretations of events in naturalistic settings, which may change over time, I recognise that it will be problematic to accurately replicate the process and results of this research study (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Eisenhardt, 2002). Whilst aiming to provide an open and transparent account of the research process, I acknowledge that as my research is presented in a way that is open to multiple interpretations, as proposed by Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2001), reliability is more of a concern to the reader than the researcher.

Validity relates to whether the research measured what it intended to measure, or whether it is plausible, and if there is sufficient evidence to support the argument (Hammersley, 1998). In contrast to the associated problems of reliability and qualitative research, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggest that validity may be



a strength of ethnographic research. In their terms this derives from the ethnographer spending sustained time in the field with the research participants who can clarify misunderstandings. Hammersley (1998) also emphasises that validity is ensured when researchers are committed to their work and carry it out carefully and thoughtfully. Consequently, I have endeavoured to accurately report on the information recorded during the participants' interviews and the events captured during observations. Additionally, I have made efforts to understand the situations as the participants did. Acknowledging that there are different viewpoints on issues, my focus centred on ensuring that the conclusions that emerged from the data and the subsequent analysis were 'trustworthy' as opposed to being 'truthful'.

## **5.7 The Research Methods**

### **Documentary review**

The two documentary review chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) were crucial for contextualising the fieldwork in terms of the different social contexts and cultures of the countries both at national and local level. A key part of the research investigated whether or not any differences identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings were reflected in broader social attitudes to children. Official documents, newspapers, current reports and public internet websites were found to be useful sources of building up a picture of wider societal attitudes to children in the two countries, and how children were represented in these texts. Consequently, the use of documentary evidence enabled access to a broad base of opinions pertinent to the centrality and place of young children in the two countries, and also contributed to an understanding of cultural contexts.

Written records, such as local authority websites in Murcia and Kent, were also useful resources for exploring the provision of purposeful ‘child-friendly’ spaces such as playgrounds in the two selected sites of Kent and Murcia. Other information collected, mainly from written documentation in the settings, was the extent to which early years settings are part of the community, and the level and amount of opportunities for parental/family involvement in the two local areas. All of this provided a broader contextual understanding of the two countries in which to situate the empirical research, to follow up emerging themes and issues from the fieldwork, and also in which to analyse the resulting data.

Notwithstanding this, all of these documents had to be viewed critically. As Atkinson and Coffey (2011) remind, it is important to approach documentary accounts as *texts* that have been constructed as rhetorical devices. These also need to be considered not only ‘...in relation to their production (authorship) and consumption (readership) but also their ‘implied readers’ and ‘implied claims of authorship’ (p.73). As the Internet was a key source for retrieving documentary evidence comprising a variety of *texts* such as news stories and public comments in reaction to media stories, the use of this medium as a research tool raised many issues that needed to be addressed (Prior, 2011). Nonetheless, texts retrieved from the Internet are no different from paper ones in that ‘they need to be read critically and analysed rather than taken at face value’ (McCulloch, 2004, p.41) in terms of their ‘authenticity, reliability, meaning and theorisation’ (p. 42). Therefore, the oft overwhelming amount, availability and diversity of online information presented me with accessible and searchable sources that needed to be used with caution (Wallace and Wray, 2006). With regard to ethical considerations pertinent to the use of these rich sources of qualitative data (i.e. discussion boards on websites), to

decide whether informed consent was required, I drew upon a discussion of “private” and “public” virtual spaces highlighted by Eysenbach and Till, 2001. Thus, only information that was accessible without subscribing or registering and therefore not regarded as a “private place” in cyberspace was referred to in my research (Eysenbach and Till, 2001, p. 1104).

### **Interviews**

Although I was interested in exploring the points of view of my interviewees, as this was a comparative study, semi-structured interviews were used rather than a more open-ended approach. In the words of Bryman (2001):

If you are doing multiple-case study research, you are likely to find that you will need some structure in order to ensure cross-case comparability (p.315).

Additionally, in the semi-structured interview, questions are normally specified but the interviewer may, ‘...seek both clarification and elaboration on the answers given’ (May, 2001, p.123). As a result of this, qualitative information can also be recorded on the topic. However, although these interviews allowed scope for the respondents to answer on their own terms, they still provided a structure to allow for comparability. Semi-structured interviews are considered to be useful if the interviewer has a ‘specific focus for their interviews’ (May, 2001, p.123). Thus making use of these interviews gave me the necessary structure for comparability within and across cases, but also allowed flexibility in being able to expand on participants’ responses. Although having a list of issues and questions to be covered, the order of questions changed and additional questions were asked as new issues arose (Gray, 2009).

Making use of semi-structured interviews also enabled me to conduct them in a variety of locations within the case study settings. This proved to be an important factor as not all of the interviewees had the time, or access to appropriate spaces to be interviewed 'formally'. Compatible with Yin's (2003) advice on using interviews in case studies, I needed to be sensitive to the interviewee's schedule and availability rather than my own. The luxury of sitting down with an interviewee in a 'private space' at a 'prearranged' time proved to be only possible in the minority of interviews undertaken. Consequently, most interviews were conducted whilst interviewees were 'working'.

In the first part of the fieldwork, 48 semi-structured interviews were carried out with practitioners at the case study settings, (pre-compulsory early years settings in Murcia and Kent). An initial interview schedule was piloted with ten early years practitioners in both England and Spain. These practitioners worked in a wide variety of pre-compulsory settings; their job titles ranged from manager to voluntary helper; they had various qualifications in early childhood education and care; their ages ranged from early twenties up to late fifties, and the amount of time they had worked with young children varied between two and ten years.

During these interviews, and in the analysis of them, it became clear that these interviewees were not only knowledgeable participants as early years practitioners but also well-informed on life with young children outside the setting. For example, some of them were parents and/or grandparents, some were experts on the facilities of the local area and others had additional employment in public places such as shops, bars etc. Thus, the interview schedule was modified to enable me to also gain information on their perspectives as non-practitioners.

The modified semi-structured interview schedule(s) (see Appendix B for English version and Appendix C for Spanish translation) was used with 23 practitioners in three settings in Kent and 25 practitioners in three settings in Murcia. This interview schedule was designed with the aim of gaining information on practitioners' interpretations of their interactions with children in their care and also to find out about their personal views on their practice. Interviewed practitioners in both Kent and Murcia were all white females. As can be seen in Chapter 6, pp. 222-227, the amount of time the practitioners had worked with young children varied between two months and 37 years. The practitioners' self-defined job titles, and the qualifications that they held in early childhood education and care were multifarious.

I was also interested in exploring practitioners' individual and collective understandings of the centrality and place of young children. As can be seen from these questionnaires, in devising the schedule I drew upon Super and Harkness' (1986) 'developmental niche', a set of concepts comprising three integrated subsystems: the physical and social settings of everyday life, the customs of childcare and child-rearing, and the psychology of caretakers. The underpinning framework is used for examining the effects of cultural features on child-rearing (p.546) and for understanding the interface between child and culture (Harkness and Super, 1993; Super and Harkness, 1997). This helped me to organise '...the culturally constructed environment of the child into empirically researchable parts, through the several lenses of physical and social settings of the child's daily life, customs and practices of care, and parental [and practitioner] ethnotheories' (Harkness and Super, 2006, p.14).

The second part of the fieldwork involved interviewing 18 identified parents/carers in the two countries. Semi-structured interview schedules (see Appendix D for English version and Appendix E for Spanish translation) were used with parents/carers who have experience of spending time in England and Spain with young children. These schedules were also based upon the data collected in the early years settings and also on issues emerging from the two documentary reviews (see Chapters 2 and 3).

A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix F) was also used with key participants from hotels, restaurants and shopping centres. Three restaurateurs, three hoteliers and three representatives from shopping centres, making a total of 18 respondents, were interviewed in both Murcia and Kent. They were selected as they hold positions within these environments where the public/private interface and where impositions may seek to facilitate or impinge on family interactions, and children's behaviour. The schedule was adapted to be appropriate for the three different environments. In constructing the schedule I drew upon the data collected in the early years settings and also on issues researched in the documentary review. The intention of these interviews was to become better informed on the participants' interpretations of the adult-child interactions and behaviours, and also on their attitudes to the place of young children. As can be seen in the table that lists participants and interview dates, attached as Appendix G, a total of 84 interviews were conducted. Throughout this thesis, all participants' have been given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

### **Observations**

Silverman (2000) cautions [in relation to interviews in qualitative research] that:

The fashionable identification of qualitative method with an analysis of how people 'see things' ignores the importance of how people 'do things' (p.284).

Considering this advice, observations were undertaken in the case-study, pre-compulsory early years settings, and also in public spaces (restaurants, hotels and shopping centres) in Murcia and Kent. Both sets of observations enabled me to observe the interactions and relationships between adults and children in formal and informal environments. The observations also enabled the data related to how people 'do things' to be collected alongside the data resulting from interviews that focused on how people 'see things'. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the data (Creswell, 2003).

These observations supported the participants' accounts derived from the interviews. They also added a multi-dimensional perspective to the data collected from the interviews which may have been reliant on interviewees' accounts and their ability to articulate this information. Consequently, I was able to exploit the reciprocal process of using observations alongside interviews, in that the interviews contextualised the observations and drew my attention to events that may not have been immediately observable. As Whyte (1984) highlights, 'Observation guides us to some of the important questions we want to ask the respondent, and interviewing helps us to interpret the significance of what we are observing' (p.96).

Most importantly, observations were selected as the most appropriate method to collect this information as there was no alternative way of eliciting this first-hand data. They were also chosen for their flexibility. This enabled me to change my focus for the observations, in relation to my ongoing reflection, analysis and

questioning of events (Lofland and Lofland, 1984). To decide how to approach my observations in the pre-compulsory early years settings, prior to my fieldwork, I spent a day in an early years setting in England and a day in an early years setting in Spain to take note of their respective daily structures and organisation. This proved useful in helping me to make note of examples of key times when adults and children interacted in the settings. In turn, the observations became more focused over the 13 days (over a period of three to four weeks) that I spent in each of the settings. Becoming more familiar with the respective daily routines and respective interactions enabled comparable ‘times’ to be recorded in each of the pre-compulsory early years settings.

Interactions between adults and young children are not only reliant on ‘verbal communications’ but also on ‘non-verbal communications’. Alasuutari (1995) suggests that ‘to record non-verbal communication one needs a movie or video camera...’ (p.43). With this in mind, when consent was given by the settings, several activities and daily routines were filmed to enable a closer look at ‘non-verbal communications’ between adults and children. However, when consent to film was declined, as in Murcia Setting 5, examples of ‘non-verbal communications’ were recorded in my notebook. Although not as detailed as events captured using a video camera, these written notes enabled me to record the context of the ‘verbal and non-verbal communications’ more effectively rather than just focusing on the actual communications that I was ‘seeing’ through the camera. A total of 21 hours of written observations was recorded in the six pre-compulsory early years settings, and 15 hours of video-recorded observations in five of the early years settings. In total 36 hours of observations of child/adult interactions were recorded (see Appendix H for details of the data resource).



## Translation issues

Investigating two countries with different languages meant that research sources were in English and Spanish. This raised questions about how to interpret these sources and also presented me with decisions of whether or not to translate the Spanish documents into English. I decided to translate the excerpts that were to be included in the thesis to make these understandable to non-Spanish speakers. To address some of the theoretical issues associated with translation, I drew upon Haywood, Thompson and Harvey's (2009) Spanish to English course in translation method. This text was invaluable in helping me to make decisions on how to represent cultural understanding of words and contextual meanings of terms (Tobin and Kurban, 2010a). In describing the aims of their course book Haywood *et al.*, (2009) suggest that:

...it aims to help students to become thoughtful, alert, self-critical translators of a range of different text types, able to weigh up linguistic and cultural choices and to articulate the reasons for their decisions (p.1).

To help me to apply the above skills between my own Spanish source texts (STs) and English target texts (TTs) I made use of Haywood *et al.*'s (2009) schema of textual 'filters' – genre, cultural, formal, semantic and varietal (pp.6 - 7). These filters were applied to my own translation tasks for this thesis which comprised translating the following Spanish source language (SL) materials into the English target language (TL):

- Written and oral media materials (i.e. newspaper articles, websites, TV and radio programmes);
- Written policy documents (i.e. curricular documents);

- Written and oral interview transcripts.

In undertaking the translation task I viewed myself as a mediator between cultures as well as a transferor of meaning (Haywood *et al.*, 2009); a key aim was to make the English Target Texts (TTs) understandable but to retain the Spanish cultural differences.

As some words need cultural understanding and may not have an equivalence of meaning in another language I addressed this issue by seeking a conceptual equivalence as opposed to the literal equivalence (Arnold *et al.*, 1975). Where this was not possible, I defined and used the foreign term without translation (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008) and where I considered terms could be transferred without affecting English-speakers comprehensibility i.e. *siesta* I did so. I was in a privileged position to personally conduct all the interviews with participants. Therefore, any clarifications of understanding could be made at source. Additionally, as a second layer of checking and comparing my own translations; two other bilingual speakers of Spanish (one a speaker of Murcian Spanish) and English were consulted during the translation process. All these strategies helped to address some of the issues highlighted by Moss (2010) in his critical discussion of English as a dominant language of academic communication.

## **5.8 Ethical Issues – before, during and after the research**

Before contacting possible early years settings for the first part of my study or the potential participants for the second part of my study, I obtained ethical consent from Roehampton University Ethics Board. Preparing my application in accordance with the guidelines of the Ethics Board was not only a requirement but

also a useful opportunity to reflect on the implications of gaining the informed consent of all the participants in my research. To inform my application and to help me to make decisions on ethical questions and dilemmas throughout my study I drew upon guidelines including those of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004), the British Sociological Association (BSA) (2002) and the National Children's Bureau (NCB) (2003). I also referred to the advice of authors such as Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson (2000), Masson (2004), Alderson (2004), Farrell (2005) and Flewitt (2005, 2006).

Prior to embarking on my fieldwork I needed to obtain an up-to-date CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check. After contacting several experts in the Spanish and European field, it became apparent that Spain did not have an equivalent to this check (also confirmed when spending time in the settings). Nevertheless, I decided to make my CRB check (and the corresponding translation) available to the settings in Spain, and to the key participants who were interviewed for the second part of the study. Gaining ethical approval also involved producing 'Consent Forms' (see Appendix I for English version and Appendix J for Spanish translation) and 'Information about the research project' (see Appendix K for English and Appendix L for Spanish translation) for all the research participants. As can be seen these documents clearly stated the aims of the project. Letters outlining dates of visits (see Appendix M) and an 'Information sheet about me' (see Appendix N) were also prepared for potential research participants. All this literature was initially written in English then translated into Spanish. Besides fulfilling the requirements of the University's Ethics Board, compiling this information was also an important reflexive exercise for me as the researcher.

Before collecting data in any of the settings I met with practitioners and any parents/carers who wanted further information about the research. At these meetings I shared details about the study in terms of the observations, interviews and participants' rights to withdraw from and/or review the material used. I also made myself personally available for further questions about the research during my time in the fieldwork settings, and all participants had my e-mail address and telephone number for queries before, during and after the research.

### **Research with young children**

Although acknowledging the advantages of including children's perspectives relative to their childhood experiences in Spain and England in my research, this would have been a stand alone research project and beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, throughout the data collection, children were informed, as fully as possible, of the purpose of my presence in the settings. Additionally, relationships were formed with the children in each of the settings.

In Kent settings, I was 'Chris' and 'Mrs. Chris' – 'the lady who liked to find out what was happening in the preschool', 'the lady who helped children on the computer' or 'the lady who played with the children', 'the lady who wrote "lots"', and 'the lady who "filmed" and took photos'. In Murcian settings, I was 'Cristina', 'the lady – sometimes teacher, who wanted to know about what happened in the settings', 'an English "princesa" who lived in a palace', 'the lady who spoke Spanish differently from everyone else', 'the lady who sang "English songs" with them.

Children, in all the settings were interested in 'me' and what I was doing there. They asked about what I was writing, 'wrote' in my notebooks, 'made' their own

‘notebooks’, and frequently watched and enquired about what I was filming. In the five settings where I filmed, the children were invited to film too - using a ‘Digital Blue: Digital Movie Creator’® camera/camcorder. Their resulting ‘videos’ and ‘photos’ were downloaded on to a computer and discussed with the children, but were left with the settings and not used for my data analysis.

### **Gaining access to six pre-compulsory early years settings**

Once Ethical Approval had been granted I approached potential fieldwork settings. In each country, settings were initially contacted by post or by e-mail and sent a letter outlining my research (see Appendix O for English letter and Appendix P for Spanish translation). This request letter also contained my e-mail addresses and my telephone numbers. Gaining access to six pre-compulsory early settings, as a researcher, proved to be a more time-consuming task than first envisaged. In most instances, settings simply did not respond to my requests but some expressed their unwillingness to become involved in the research. This was compatible with Troman’s (1996) discussion of the problems in negotiating entry. On questioning those who declined to become involved about this, reasons given were related to increased workload pressures, the high profile given to the protection of children from potential abusers (especially in the media), the various attitudes towards the value of research and the decreasing personal autonomy given to practitioners in terms of guidelines and curricula.

In relation to the *type* of settings, it soon became apparent that it was impossible to find any that would be directly comparable. As exemplified in the documentary review (Chapter 3), both the selected areas, within the two countries, have contrasting early years structures resulting in very different settings with their own methods of organisation, aims, philosophies and policies. Likewise, it

also became apparent that the practitioners' training and qualifications not only differed between countries but also within settings – especially in England.

Thus, the selection of settings was also constrained by finding settings that would be willing to become involved in the study and to allow me to visit over a period of three to four weeks. Consequently, the gatekeepers' willingness to become involved ultimately dictated the actual settings that I was finally able to spend time in. However, my main interest was not to compare 'settings'. Although I recognised that settings needed to be roughly comparable, I was much more interested in the relations between adults and children 'within' the settings, and also in the practitioners' philosophical and theoretical assumptions that underpinned their individual practices and behaviours.

The six early years settings in the County of Kent and the Region of Murcia, an out-of-town setting, a coastal setting and a town/city setting in each locality, were visited between September 2007 and May 2008 (for detailed descriptions see Chapter 6, pp.209-213). Visits were arranged to avoid the settings' periods of closure and each setting was visited for 13 days over a period of three to four weeks. The process of gaining access in the two countries, and the procedures that I was required to adopt in order to do so, was revealing in relation to the different organisational structures of the early years settings. In particular, the practitioners in Kent settings appeared to have more autonomy and power than the ones in Murcia in relation to deciding whether or not to become involved in my research. Although all the settings were used to having visitors, it was interesting to note that only one out of the six sites was accustomed to having a researcher spend time there. Such reflections on my experience of gaining access to the settings were compatible with May's (2001) view that:

...experiences gained during negotiations for access to a group or organization...are fundamental to the aims of enhancing understanding and explaining social relations (p.157).

Consequently, consideration of the time and effort that went into the process of gaining access to fieldwork sites in the two countries is also relevant to my thesis.

### **Gaining access to hotels, shopping centres and restaurants**

For the second phase of the study hoteliers, representatives of shopping centres and restaurateurs in Murcia and Kent were contacted and invited to share their knowledge and experience on the provision that they make for children in their respective environments. They were also questioned about their experiences of child- and adult-relationships and behaviours observed in these public areas. Participants who consented to be involved were sent a letter confirming a date for the interview (see Appendix Q for English version and Appendix R for Spanish translation). With the consent of representatives from these identified hotels, shopping centres and restaurants, I also undertook some written observations of adult/child interactions in these public places. This resulted in a total data resource of 36 hours of written observations (see Appendix S for dates of visits to hotels, restaurants and shopping centres).

## **5.9 Data Collection**

### **Visual and audio methods of data collection**

The decision of whether or not to make use of a tape recorder and/or a video recorder to capture data from interviews and observations was made primarily so that the resulting recordings could be used as an *aide memoire*. In relation to using

a video recorder for this purpose, it was important to consider Pink's (2001) caution that video is good for visual 'note-taking' but needs to be, '...qualified with a rejection of the naïve assumption that video records an untainted reality in favour of a reflexive approach...' (p.87). I used the video recorder to capture 'non-verbal communications' between the adults and the children but was constantly aware that this would only give me a partial view of what I was observing. As Mason (2004) suggests, I did not have access to what went on behind the camera. Therefore, to complement these video recordings, I made written notes both in my 'fieldwork notebook' and 'research diary' before and after using the camera. In turn, the video data was used iteratively rather than being fully transcribed.

Similarly, the interviews that I taped were supported by notes and reflections in my diary. From a practical point of view, this practice was to aid the transcription process when there was a lot of background noise – especially in some of the early years settings. However, where, when and who I was able to record was not always within my power. Although no participants refused to be recorded whilst being interviewed, there were several occasions when it was inappropriate to do so, mainly because of the level of background noise in the settings. In relation to recording visual data, several parents/carers declined to give their consent for their children to be filmed. Although they had been reassured that resulting data would only be used for research purposes, their refusal to give consent was linked to concerns about 'images of children on the internet' and to recent high profile child abduction cases in the media. These factors also began to raise questions relevant to the topic of my research related to the 'protection of children', especially as this varied between the settings in Murcia and the ones in Kent.



Therefore, in some cases, plans to film were abandoned altogether or arrangements made to only film the children whose parents/carers had given their consent. Nevertheless, even when I had received consent to film, on a personal level, I felt more intrusive tape-recording interviews and filming activities in some of the settings than in others. This reaction impacted on the times and the events that I recorded.

### **Written methods of data collection**

The fieldnotes which we collect and *write* have always embraced the personal. Fieldnotes describe places and people and events. They are also used as the textual space for the recording of our emotions and personal experiences...fieldnotes are the textual place where we, at least privately, acknowledge our presence and conscience (Coffey 1999, p.119-120).

For each early years setting, I had a separate notebook. This was used for recording personal notes such as; which activities to observe and/or film, analytical thoughts, theoretical points, and possible links between people's actions and people's verbal comments, and the possible influence of the physical environment. My observations of events, in the settings, were all dated and any significant timing of activities etc. was noted. Every night, these written observations were transferred into my computer whilst I was still able to recall them clearly.

Additionally, I had a notebook to record observations in public places. However, although I had permission from the representative to undertake observations in these public places, I felt obtrusive writing in locations such as restaurants, hotels and shopping centres. Therefore, notes were written after

leaving the public spaces, and subsequently typed up and entered into the computer.

In parallel with these notebooks, I also completed a 'research diary' which was mostly written retrospectively, and enabled me to reflect on my own personal feelings in respect to the days I spent in the fieldwork settings. This diary was used for recording any significant links with my developing theoretical work, in relation to my current reading and writing.

### **5.10 Analysis, interpretation and categorization of the data**

As this was a qualitative study, data analysis was an ongoing process insofar as the fieldwork involved reflexivity and embraced flexibility in relation to observed social phenomena. Within the structure of *a priori* semi-structured interview schedules, which drew upon the concept of the developmental niche, I employed an iterative-inductive approach (O'Reilly, 2005) and coding began at an early stage in parallel with the collection of the data (Gray, 2009). However, my in-depth analysis of the data commenced when I withdrew from the settings beginning with a period of familiarisation with the available data. Analysis involved transcribing, translating and organising the data, and reading and re-reading it to determine categories, themes and patterns. This process was undertaken in relation to my 'theoretical proposition' (Yin, 2003) that led to the case study that; 'Societal attitudes to children and childhood in Spain and England may be reflected in early years settings'. Additionally, this part of the inquiry became further focused to look at how typical and widespread examples of interactions, from observations were; within settings and across people in the settings. These examples were then compared alongside the data obtained from

interviewing the practitioners. Individual cases were initially analysed then cross-case analysis was employed. As suggested by Charmaz (2006), Glaser and Strauss invite readers to use grounded theory strategies flexibly. Thus, my analysis was informed by a grounded theory procedure (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) rather than being dominated by this approach.

The task of coding, memoing, and retrieving textual data from interviews and observations was initially carried out using a computer aided qualitative data analysis (CADQAS) package 'QSR NVivo7'. At the outset, considering the large amount of written data, this software facilitated the indexing and retrieval process, by enabling the indexing of a large number of categories, more efficiently than could be done by hand. Spending time 'getting to know' the data helped me to avoid overriding the analysis of the data with the 'need to be familiar with the data' (May, 2001) and falling into the trap of not doing enough reflecting. It was also important that *I* defined the key areas of analysis rather than relying on the software functions. Bazeley and Richards (2002) suggest, *NVivo* can be useful in managing, accessing and analyzing qualitative data, '...without losing its richness or the closeness to data that is critical for qualitative research' (p.1). However, on a personal level when working with *NVivo*, I found myself not only creating an unwieldy amount of codes but also feeling that the process was becoming increasingly mechanistic. Therefore, I decided to revert to a manual procedure of reading and re-reading my data, identifying recurring ideas and then sorting these ideas into themes compatible with LeCompte, Preissle and Tesch's (1993) description of inductive content analysis.

Using long-hand analysis, both on and off screen, the data generated from the first part of the research project (data from participants' interviews and data from

observations undertaken at the pre-compulsory early years settings) were coded (alongside memoing) to identify topics, themes and issues. Categories were based upon interpretive or reflexive readings of the data. Bringing the analyses arising from the data sets together enabled an exploration of patterns and themes. The conclusions that were drawn and verified from this part of the data analysis, firstly, within the individual cases and then across the six pre-compulsory case study settings addressed the question: Are there any differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings in (Murcia) Spain and (Kent) England? These conclusions also facilitated a response to the question: Do identified patterns of interactions in these early years settings and practitioners' beliefs and values about children and child-rearing reflect the social location of young children within the cultures investigated?

To complement and to follow up issues emerging from the empirical research, documentary evidence of relevant sources such as policy documents, newspapers, current reports and public internet websites that focus upon the two countries were analysed. This analysis, in terms of the social production and context of their production (Punch, 2003), enabled any notable similarities and differences to be identified in relation to the two societies' attitudes to young children. The same methods of analysis, used with the data from the early years settings was employed with the data from key participants' interviews (restaurateurs, hoteliers, representatives from shopping centres, and parents/carers who had experienced spending time in the two countries) and observations in public spaces. These methods helped to identify any patterns and themes in relation to adults' attitudes to the centrality and place of young children, and also to consider the question:

Are the differences identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood?

In summary, the steps that guided my path through my analysis of the data were transcribing and translating, collecting/coding/collecting, becoming familiar with the data, a focused reading of the data, reviewing and amending codes and finally generating theory (Gray, 2009) to explicate my themes. Nevertheless, within this apparently neat structure, the messiness of working with qualitative data should not be underestimated. After exiting from the fieldwork sites I maintained contact with the research participants, and on completion of the study all participants were given feedback on the final outcomes of the research.

## **5.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter I began by discussing the background to my research study that was motivated by my genuine fascination with the possible differences between Spain and England in respect of their societal attitudes towards young children, and the value they assign to their children. Recognising the inherent difficulties of comparing the countries' cultures as a whole, I explained my reasons for confining my fieldwork to the County of Kent and the Region of Murcia. Having defined the physical boundaries for my research, I then described the ontological and epistemological frameworks that underpinned my investigation. Following on, I focused upon the interpretive stance that I chose to adopt, especially in relation to being open about my own pre-understandings. This view underpinned the construction of my research questions which were designed to allow an exploration of both the micro-level of the pre-compulsory early years settings and also the broader contexts in which they are situated. I then explained how my

qualitative methodological approach helped me to address these questions before introducing my strategies of inquiry.

These strategies comprised an ethnographic approach, a comparative intellectual puzzle and the use of case studies. My role as an ethnographer, underpinned all aspects of the research process. Consequently, the space and the detail that I dedicated to the reflection of my own self-identity in this chapter emphasised the importance of rendering this transparent. Whilst recognising some of the limitations in carrying out comparative research, I endeavoured to highlight its many qualities. In turn, I explained how my research strategies have allowed me to adopt multiple data collection methods consisting of interviews, observations and documentary analysis. These methods have been looked at individually to demonstrate why they were the most appropriate tools to use for answering my research questions. Most importantly they were chosen to enable research participants to share their experiences and knowledge, and to allow me to observe their behaviours in a variety of contexts.

As explained in this chapter, gaining access to the fieldwork sites was a time-consuming process with its own hidden agenda. During this time, and indeed throughout the research process, I negotiated ethical issues which constantly presented dilemmas especially when undertaking research with young children. My final section described how I analysed, interpreted and categorized the collected data. The subsequent chapters demonstrate how these data have not only provided me with some answers to my research questions, but have also presented me with further channels of inquiry. In the next chapter I present the data arising from my time spent in the six pre-compulsory early years settings and discuss the implications of these findings in the context of the reviewed literature.

## **Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis:**

### **The six pre-compulsory early years settings**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss my findings in relation to the two research questions that I addressed in the first part of my fieldwork which was located in the six early years settings. I begin by revisiting the concept of the “developmental niche”; a theoretical framework for studying the cultural structuring of children’s environments (Super and Harkness, 1986; Harkness and Super, 1999). This framework provided an underpinning structure for my investigation, and analysis of the data.

I then introduce the six Murcian and Kentish pre-compulsory early years settings. In doing so, I discuss aspects of the settings’ physical environments, their curricular frameworks and present the profiles of the 48 practitioners who I interviewed. I move on to look at how the curricula and the practitioners’ professional training were merged with practitioners’ ‘implicit cultural practices’ (Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa, 2009) to create the routines that underpinned the daily activities at each of these six settings.

Following on, I present some of the data resulting from the interviews and observations at the settings, and the entries in my research diary. These examples have been selected as they demonstrate some of the respective cultural differences towards young children in Murcia and Kent. I discuss these data through the lens of three identified themes (risk, safety and resilience; affective physical interactions and behaviour management: the promotion of social norms). These themes enabled some insight into how the practices at the visited settings played a

role in preparing children to become culturally appropriate members of their respective societies.

## **6.1 The questions and theory that guided the research**

### **The questions**

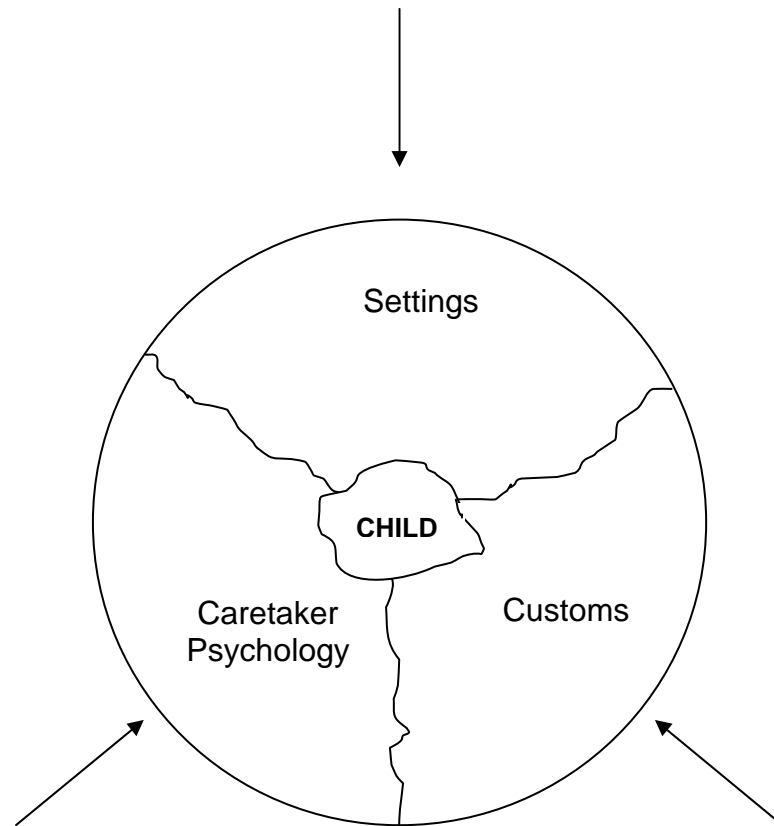
- Are there any differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings in Murcia, Spain and Kent, England?
- Do identified patterns of interactions in these early years settings, and practitioners' beliefs and values about children and child-rearing reflect the social location of young children within the cultures investigated?

### **The theory**

These two questions were addressed by drawing upon Super and Harkness' (1986) developmental niche framework (as introduced in Chapter 4). This framework had enabled a structure for the interviews, the observations and the entries in my research diary at the pre-compulsory early years settings. The niche comprised the following three features of early childhood environments:

- The physical environment or social setting (i.e. activities, organisation and planning);
- The culturally regulated customs and child-rearing practices: child care and child-rearing customs (i.e. caring, teaching – priority given to);
- The dominant beliefs or 'ethnotheories' about childhood (Practitioners' beliefs and values in relation to the needs of children, the nature of development and how this informs their practice).





**Figure 6.1: Diagram of Developmental Niche**  
**Source: Adapted from Harkness and Super (2006)**

In Chapter 4 I discussed the cultural constructs of individualism and collectivism. As highlighted in this chapter, the UK has been criticised for being overly individualistic with societies such as Spain used as examples of more collective cultures. Taking this proposition into account, in my analysis of the data, I considered elements of Rosenthal's (2003) framework for exploring collectivist and individualist cultures in relation to valued educational practices (see Appendix T). This was to help identify how the cultural constructions about early childhood (David and Powell, 2010) impacted upon the children's learning environments, learning activities and adult-child interactions. However, relative to my discussion of these dichotomous constructs in Chapter 4, it was not my intention to assign the

Murcian settings or the Kent settings to an individualist cultural community or a collectivist cultural community (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996; Rosenthal and Roer-Strier, 2006; Tobin *et al.*, 2009). Instead, what emerged was a continuum of values which appeared to be interwoven at various levels in all the Murcian and Kent settings. Notwithstanding this observation, I make reference to these constructs where I consider them to be pertinent to the discussion.

## 6.2 The six case study pre-compulsory settings

Six pre-compulsory settings were visited for the first part of the empirical research. The descriptions of the three settings in the County of Kent and the three settings in the Region of Murcia are presented in Tables 6.1 – 6.6.

**Table 6.1: Description of Setting 1 (Kent coastal)**

<b>Description of Setting 1</b>	Setting 1 is a preschool, registered for sessional daycare, which is located in the centre of a small coastal town in the County of Kent. The setting operates from a church hall.
<b>Spatial details</b>	Children have access to the large hall and toilet area, but not to any outdoor play area. There is also a kitchen which is for staff use only. Equipment in the hall has to be 'set-up' and 'cleared away' on a daily basis by the staff.
<b>Opening times</b>	Sessions run from 9.15 am until 11.45 am, five days a week. The preschool is open during school term-time which is currently 38 weeks a year.
<b>The children</b>	Twenty children aged two years to four years currently attend the setting. The group serves both the local and surrounding area which represents a broad socioeconomic mix. Almost all the children are White British, but the setting also supports some children who have English as an additional language. The preschool also makes provision for a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.
<b>Staffing details</b>	Six early years practitioners.
<b>Stated aims of the setting</b>	<i>"Education through play: To provide a safe, warm, and happy environment where your child can learn through play to develop social skills and independence, with the opportunity to explore to fulfil their potential, no child is forced to join in but will be encouraged...we want your child to be happy with us"</i> (Setting 1 Prospectus).

**Table 6.2: Description of Setting 2 (Kent outskirts)**

<b>Description of Setting 2</b>	Setting 2 is situated 'out-of-town' in a semi-rural area in the County of Kent. It is privately owned, registered for sessional daycare and operates from a cricket pavilion.
<b>Spatial details</b>	Children have access to a large playroom, and a smaller room for structured activities, which is also used as an entrance and departure hall. The setting has an enclosed outdoor play area and a kitchen area for staff use only.
<b>Opening times</b>	Sessions currently run from 9.00 am until 12.00 pm. Children have an option of staying for lunch from 12.00 pm until 1.00 pm. The setting is open during school term-time which is currently 38 weeks a year.
<b>The children</b>	The setting accepts children from the age of two years until the term before they begin the reception class. Twenty seven children attend the setting from both the local and surrounding areas. Most of them are White British but several of the children are of mixed heritage.
<b>Staffing details</b>	Seven early years practitioners.
<b>Stated aims of the setting</b>	<i>"...all the children are supported in developing their potential at their own pace. Our keyworker scheme enables us to ensure that our planned curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of each child. By offering developmentally appropriate play activities and a high level of adult input we are able to provide a curriculum which incorporates the nationally approved Foundation Stage, which prepares children for later work in primary schools"</i> (Setting 2 Prospectus).

**Table 6.3: Description of Setting 3 (Kent urban)**

<b>Description of Setting</b>	Setting 3 is situated close to the centre of town in a built-up area comprising residential housing, and also some commercial and industrial buildings. It operates from a purpose built building. The setting has charitable status but is also a limited company.
<b>Spatial details</b>	Indoor space comprises two classrooms – one of which has a separate toileting/changing area within it. There is also a large hallway and cloakroom, and members of staff have access to a kitchen and a small office. There is an enclosed outdoor play area which has been designed to incorporate different areas.
<b>Opening times</b>	The setting is open during term-time only for 38 weeks a year. Although the two sessions run from 9.15 am until 11.45 am and from 1.00 pm until 3.30 pm, the setting also offers an extended hours service from 8.30 am until 4.00 pm which many of the children/parents make use of.
<b>The children</b>	Sixty four children aged from two years to five years currently attend the setting. Most children who attend live in the neighbourhood which mainly comprises local authority housing. However, the setting also takes children from surrounding localities. Most of the children are White British but the setting is increasingly admitting children who have moved to Kent from Eastern European countries.
<b>Staffing details</b>	Nine early years practitioners. The setting also employs an administrative assistant and a cleaner.
<b>Stated aims of the setting</b>	<b>Overall written aim(s) of setting:</b> <i>"...to provide good quality care and education for young children, in a safe yet stimulating environment. Your child will be given the freedom to experience a wide range of activities, in a play-based curriculum, providing the best possible foundation for primary school. Your child will enjoy the company of other children, learn to share and take turns; mix with adults from outside the family so gaining confidence and independence; be part of an organization that welcomes families from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and actively seeks to value and respect the diversity of our multi-cultural society"</i> (Setting 3 Prospectus).

**Table 6.4: Description of Setting 4 (Murcia coastal)**

<b>Description of Setting</b>	Setting 4 is a privately-run ' <i>escuela infantil</i> ' situated in the centre of a Murcian coastal town surrounded by commercial and residential buildings, and operates from a large villa.
<b>Spatial details</b>	The setting is divided into six ' <i>aulas</i> ' (classrooms) into which the children are organised by age. Each ' <i>aula</i> ' has its own children's changing and toileting area. Children also have access to a large indoor play area (which doubles up as a garage), an ' <i>aula de psicomotricidad</i> ' (a room used for physical development activities), a kitchen/dining room where they eat lunch and a large outdoor play area which also has a smaller section for the children who are under one year old. There is also an office, a large hallway and a waiting/preparation room.
<b>Opening times</b>	The setting is open all the year round apart from a week at Christmas, a week at Easter and the month of August. It opens five days a week from 8.00 am until 8.00 pm but most children attend between the hours of 9.00 am and 1.00 pm.
<b>The children</b>	One hundred and six children aged from three months to three years currently attend the setting. They come from both local and surrounding areas. The fee-paying nature of this privately owned setting tends to attract parents from a higher socio-economic class. Most of the children who attend are Spanish and several are of mixed European heritage.
<b>Staffing details</b>	Ten practitioners work with the children including the owner and a part-time 'English' teacher. There is also a cleaner, and two staff members who prepare and serve the children's lunches.
<b>Stated aims of the setting</b>	<i>"An 'escuela infantil' is the familiar place where children begin to discover the world that surrounds them. They discover that there are other places and other people besides their own family. Equally the first years of life form the foundation for their future personalities, where they acquire good habits, knowledge and routines that will help them to develop as people. We help this process in a natural and balanced way in a pleasant, stimulating environment run by a well-qualified educational team"</i> (Prospectus Setting 4).

**Table 6.5: Description of Setting 5 (Murcia urban)**

<b>Description of Setting</b>	Setting 5, a local authority ' <i>escuela infantil</i> ' is situated close to the centre of Murcia on a busy road surrounded by both commercial and residential buildings. It operates from a new purpose-built building which it re-located to in January 2007. As the setting is over-subscribed, the setting operates a points system that gives priority to children whose parents work. The fees that the parents pay are income-related.
<b>Spatial details</b>	Inside the building are eight separate ' <i>aulas</i> ' (classrooms) in which the children are organised by age. These are arranged around two corridors, which are also used for large physical play when the weather is inclement. There is one ' <i>aula</i> ' for children with severe special needs, a babyroom, three ' <i>aulas</i> ' for children aged one and two years, and three ' <i>aulas</i> ' for children aged two and three years. Other rooms include a large dining room for the children, a kitchen, a staff dining room and a staff room, a 'staff preparation' room, a laundry and an office. Outdoors, there is a large play area.
<b>Opening times</b>	The setting is open from mid-September until the end of July. It closes for two weeks at Christmas and two weeks at Easter, and for three other separate days – one for the patron saint of scholars. The setting is open from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8.30 am and 4.00 pm (closes at 3.00 pm during July). The morning session runs from 8.30 am until 12.00 pm and the afternoon session from 3.00 pm until 4.00 pm, and the children have lunch then have a rest between 12.00 pm and 3.00 pm. There is extended opening from 7.45 am each morning but this cannot accommodate more than eight children.
<b>The children</b>	Ninety children aged six months to three years currently attend the setting. Most of the children who attend are Spanish and live in the local area which has a high level of local authority housing. However, a growing proportion of the children belong to a range of ethnic minority groups and come from places such as North Africa and Peru.
<b>Staffing details</b>	A total of fourteen staff work with the children. These comprise a ' <i>directora</i> ' (manager), ten early years practitioners and three support workers. There is also a cook and a cleaner employed at the setting.
<b>Stated aims of the setting</b>	<b>Overall written aim(s) of setting:</b> <i>"To promote and ensure the all round development and potentialities of the child in an enriched, playful and emotional environment which helps children to grow up happy, where they are continually stimulated and positively reinforced by the professionals at the setting in collaboration with the families"</i> (Prospectus for Murcian municipal <i>escuelas infantiles</i> ).

**Table 6.6: Description of Setting 6 (Murcia outskirts)**

<b>Description of Setting</b>	Setting 6, a local authority ' <i>escuela infantil</i> ', is situated in the centre of a village on the outskirts of the city of Murcia. It operates from purpose-built premises. As Setting 5 a points system is in place that gives priority to children whose parents work. The fees that the parents pay are income-related.
<b>Spatial details</b>	Indoors there are five ' <i>aulas</i> ' (classrooms) each with self-contained children's toilets and changing area, a large entrance hall, staff 'preparation' room, kitchen, large children's dining room, an ' <i>aula de psicomotricidad</i> ' (a room used for physical development activities) and an office. The children are organised into the ' <i>aulas</i> ' by age. Outdoors there is a large play area. This is accessed directly from the ' <i>aulas</i> ' through the patio doors.
<b>Opening times</b>	As both Settings 5 and 6 are run by the local authority of Murcia, the opening hours, days and holidays of Setting 6 are identical to Setting 5 (See Table 6.5).
<b>The children</b>	Fifty three children aged from six months to three years currently attend the setting. Most of the children who attend are from the local area which comprises both urban and rural spaces.
<b>Staffing details</b>	Six practitioners work with the children, including the ' <i>directora</i> '. There is also a cook, two support workers and a cleaner who work at the setting.
<b>Stated aims of the setting</b>	(See aims of setting for Setting 5 in Table 6.5)

### 6.3 The settings' physical environments

It was noticeable that the indoor play spaces in the Murcian settings contained fewer resources than the settings in Kent, and therefore gave the impression of being less cluttered. However, there was no reason to believe this difference was symptomatic of a lack of funding as the Murcian settings all had storage cupboards containing additional equipment. Although there were some examples of children's work exhibited in the Murcian settings, the main displays comprised adult-created artwork. In contrast, the Kent practitioners prioritised child-created contributions to decorate their settings' environments.

All six settings, except for Murcia Setting 4, arranged their spatial environments using thematic areas referred to as *rincones* (corners) or *zonas* (zones). Some of these areas were common to both Kent and Murcian settings such as Role-play area(s) (Settings 1-3); *Zona de juego simbólico* (Setting 5 and 6). However, other areas were particular to either the Kent or Murcia settings, and in Murcia some areas were specific to the individual *aulas* (classrooms). The

Murcian settings were distinguishable from the Kent settings by their provision of large mirrors which flanked at least one wall in each of the *aulas*. Noticeably, there was an absence of natural materials such as sand and water in the Murcian settings. This provision contrasted with the Kent settings where these materials were available each day.

#### **6.4 Curricular Frameworks in Kent and Murcia**

Whilst the data were being collected, both areas were and still are, at the time of completing this chapter, experiencing changes in relation to the early years curricular frameworks (see Chapter 2). Information obtained on the Spanish early years curriculum *El Currículo de la Educación Infantil Ley Orgánica de Educación* (LOE), (2006) and the English curriculum *The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* (DCSF, 2008a, 2008b) enabled comparisons to be made between the two systems. Some of the purposes and aims of this phase of pre-compulsory education according to Spain and England's early years' written national curricula are summarised in Tables 6.7 and 6.8.

**Table 6.7: Purposes and aims of pre-compulsory education in England**

Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF, 2008b; 2008c)
<p><b>Context</b> The EYFS is mandatory for all schools and early years providers in Ofsted registered settings attended by young children – that is children from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has their fifth birthday.</p> <p><b>Aims</b> The overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children achieve the <i>Every Child Matters</i> outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving well-being by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting the standards for the learning, development and care young children should experience when they are attending a setting outside their family home;</li> <li>• providing for equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice;</li> <li>• creating the framework for partnership working between parents and professionals;</li> <li>• improving quality and consistency in the early years sector;</li> <li>• laying a secure foundation for future learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Approach</b> Effective practice in the EYFS is built on four guiding themes. They provide a context for the requirements and describe how practitioners should support the development, learning and care of young children. The themes are each broken down into four commitments describing how the principles can be put into practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A unique child</b> recognises that every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. The commitments are focused around development, inclusion; safety; and health and well-being.</li> <li>• <b>Positive relationships</b> describes how children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. The commitments are focused around respect; partnership with parents; supporting learning; and the role of the key person.</li> <li>• <b>Enabling environments</b> explains that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. The commitments are focused around observation, assessment and planning; support for every child; the learning environment; and the wider context – transitions, continuity, and multi-agency working.</li> <li>• <b>Learning and development</b> recognises that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and that all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.</li> </ul> <p>This approach ensures that the EYFS meets the overarching aim of improving outcomes and reflects that it is every child's right to grow up safe; healthy; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and with economic well-being.</p> <p><b>Sources: EYFS (DCSF, 2008b, 2008c)</b></p>



**Table 6.8: Purposes and aims of pre-compulsory education in Spain**

<b>Educación Infantil (LOE, 2006)</b>
<p><b>Principles</b></p> <p><i>Educación infantil</i> represents the educational stage with its own identity that attends to girls and boys from birth until six years of age.</p> <p><i>Educación infantil</i> has a voluntary nature and its aim is to contribute to children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development.</p> <p>With the objective of respecting the fundamental responsibility of mothers, fathers and carers in this phase, the educational centres will cooperate closely with them.</p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <p>The <i>educación infantil</i> will contribute to develop in girls and boys the capacity that allow them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To know their own body and that of others, their possibilities of action, and to learn to respect differences;</li> <li>• To observe and explore their home environment, natural and physical;</li> <li>• To gradually acquire autonomy in their regular activities;</li> <li>• To develop emotional capacities;</li> <li>• To relate to others and to gradually acquire fundamental guidelines of co-existence and social relations, and how to peacefully resolve conflicts.</li> <li>• To develop communication skills in different languages and forms of expression;</li> <li>• To begin the learning of early maths skills, reading and writing skills, and movement, gesture and rhythm.</li> </ul> <p><b>Organization and main teaching methods</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This phase of education will be organised in two cycles; the first 0 to 3 years; and the next 3 to 6 years;</li> <li>2. The educational character of the cycles will be recorded by the educational centres in a pedagogic proposal;</li> <li>3. In both cycles of <i>educación infantil</i> attention will be paid to emotional development, movement and physical control, communication and language, the guidelines of coexistence and social relations, as well as discovering the physical and social characteristics of the environment in which they live. This will help girls and boys to adopt a positive and balanced self-image and to acquire personal autonomy.</li> <li>4. The educational content of <i>educación infantil</i> will be organized in areas corresponding to children's own experiences and stage of development and it will be presented using a range of shared activities that are interesting and significant for the children.</li> <li>5. In the second cycle children will be introduced to a second language, and also the basics of reading and writing. They will also be introduced to basic number skills, ICT and communication through the visual arts and music.</li> <li>6. The methods of teaching in both cycles will be based on experiences, activities and play and this will be put into practice in a loving and trusting environment that will promote self-esteem and social integration.</li> </ol> <p>The educational management will determine the educational content of the first cycle in accordance with the information in this chapter. This will be regulated within the requirements of the centres that deliver the said cycle regarding the number of staff, the facilities and the number of pupils.</p>

**Source: LOE (2006c)**

Spain's pre-compulsory phase consists of two cycles (0 - 3 years and 3 - 6 years) (*Real Decreto 114/2004, de 23 de enero*), whereas England has brought together its previous frameworks (*Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, Birth to Three Matters* and the *National Standards for Under 8s Daycare and Childminding*). As a result of this *The Early Years Foundation Stage* is a continuous curriculum for children from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has his/her fifth birthday.

Although the English and Spanish systems of early years education and care, varied in size and scope, they were underpinned by personal, social, emotional and educational values that were linked to children's developmental ages and stages. In turn, they both comprised areas of learning that underpinned the settings' planning and individual practitioners' planning. The Kent settings' planning was based on the following six areas of learning from the EYFS (DCSF, 2008b; 2008c):

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development;
- Communication, Language and Literacy;
- Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy;
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World;
- Physical Development;
- Creative Development.

As can be seen in Figure 6.2, these areas are a statutory requirement for all funded settings in England and form part of the Early Years Foundation Stage Principle; Learning and Development (DCSF, 2007a).



Figure 6.2: The Early Years Foundation Stage Principles Poster

Source: DCSF, 2007a

Although a national framework (*Ley Orgánica de Educación*) was in place in Spain, as Murcia was an autonomous region, it also had its own localised curriculum (*Los Reales Decretos – autonomías*) (see Figure 6.3). Even though Murcia was not obliged to follow Spain's national curriculum, the Murcian settings' planning (Setting 5 and 6) was underpinned by the *LOE*'s (2006) three areas of learning:

- *Área de Identidad y Autonomía Personal* (Area of Personal identity and Autonomy/Independence);
- *Área de Medio Físico y Social* (Area of Physical and Social environment);
- *Área de Comunicación y Representación* (Area of Communication and Representation/Expression).

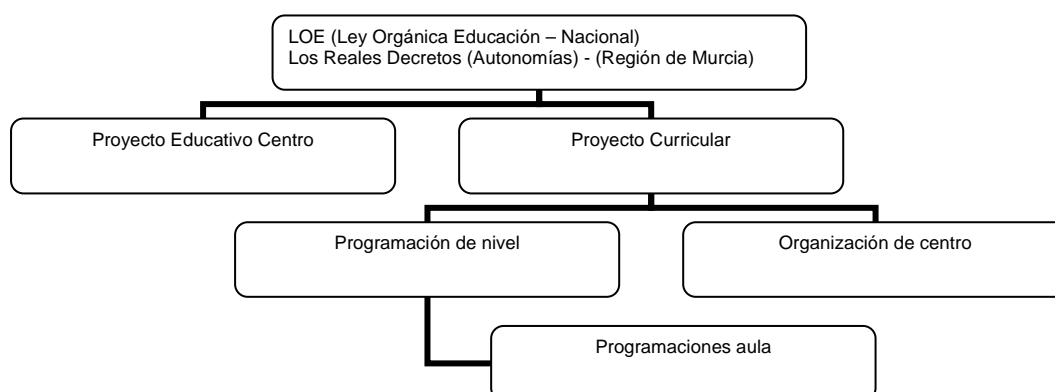
As can be seen in Tables 6.7 and 6.8 both the Spanish and English national curricular documents include core principles, a set of beliefs and values, which underpin good practice. Both documents have a preventative and compensatory nature based upon a view that effective early education can avert future problems (MEC, 2004; Eurydice, 2009; 2010). Likewise, they both emphasise the pre-compulsory phase of education as a preparation for school and this is reflected in the formal educative character of the two curricula (MEC, 2006). For example, the EYFS components (DCSF, 2007a, 2007b, 2008b, 2008c) continually make reference to *early learning goals and educational programmes*. In turn, the Spanish documentation highlights the distinction between the *asistencial* (welfare/caring) model of *guarderías* and the more highly regarded educational nature associated with *escuelas infantiles* (MEC, 2004).

In summary, both documents accentuate the importance of this phase of children's lives in providing a foundation for their future roles in society, and in reducing inequalities. These aims are to be achieved within a partnership between early years professionals and parents/carers; expected to work together to raise children who are independent and autonomous, and relate appropriately to others. At the same time, these adults are required to give due attention to children's physical, intellectual, affective, social and moral development. Nevertheless, the LOE, (2006) gave the Murcian settings more flexibility, than the EYFS, (DCSF, 2008b; 2008c) afforded the Kent settings, to be able to adapt national criteria to their local circumstances (Müller *et al.*, 2009).

Within the framework of the LOE, (2006), to guide the structured aspects of their work, the Murcian settings regularly made use of published schemes for the '*Primer Ciclo de Educación Infantil*'. The manager of Setting 4 had designed her

own version of the workbooks which was linked to a ‘*Didactic Objectives*’ list. These objectives differed according to the age group of the children in each *aula*. At Murcia Settings 4 and 6 children completed an activity, from the published schemes, almost every day to help meet these objectives. Within the different *aulas*, practitioners produced an annual scheme of work for their group of children.

At Settings 5 and 6, published schemes were incorporated into the practitioners’ individual planning which followed a trimester system. The planning at these two settings was personal to these individual settings and the particular group of children practitioners were working with that year. As well as identifying learning objectives, the practitioners’ planning included a *Programación Aula* (see Figure 6.3) that specified how the learning was to be achieved. A key part of this planning was a detailed written overview ‘*Características Propias Del Grupo de Niños/as*’ of the particular group of children that the practitioner was working with. This document described the size of the group, the composition of boys and girls, their nationalities, any children with special needs, their month of birth and the social group(s) that they belonged to.



**Figure 6.3: Structure of curriculum used in Murcian Settings 5 and 6**

The three Kent settings' planning was governed by their adherence to the national EYFS (DCSF, 2008b, 2008c). This resulted in a less flexible and less localised system of planning than that of the Murcian settings. Likewise, there was no document that described the individual features of the children as a dynamic group; moreover they were viewed as a group of separate individuals. The EYFS (DCSF, 2008b, 2008c) underpinned the Kent settings' long-term, medium-term, weekly and daily planning which also emphasised individual children's learning needs.

## **6.5 The Practitioners**

During my time spent visiting the six pre-compulsory settings, I interviewed 48 practitioners who worked with the children. The interviews with these practitioners were useful in exploring some of the factors that contributed to, and shaped their beliefs about early childhood and the needs of young children or their 'ethnotheories' (Super and Harkness, 1986; Harkness and Super, 1999). Practitioners' personal and biographical information resulting from these interviews (also see Tables 6.9 - 6.14) revealed a plethora of factors that were likely to have impacted upon their practices. This information included the length of time practitioners had been working in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), how long they had been employed at the current setting, their self-defined job titles and their early years qualifications.

**Table 6.9: Practitioners' personal and biographical details (Setting 1: Kent coastal)**

<b>Practitioner</b>	<b>How long working in ECEC</b>	<b>How long working at this setting</b>	<b>Job title (as defined by individual practitioner)</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
Jackie	19 years	19 years	Owner/ Manager	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education; Diploma in Playgroup Practice (DPP)
Judy	14 years	12 years	Supervisor	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education
Carol	18 years	7+ years	Deputy Supervisor	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education
Margaret	6 years	6 years	Playgroup Assistant	Certificate in Playgroup Practice (CPP)
Jen	18 years	18 years	Playgroup Assistant	Certificate in Playgroup Practice (CPP)
Heather	6 years	5 years	Pre-school Assistant	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education; Certificate in Playgroup Practice (CPP)

**Table 6.10: Practitioners' personal and biographical details**  
**(Setting 2: Kent outskirts)**

<b>Practitioner</b>	<b>How long working in ECEC</b>	<b>How long working at this setting</b>	<b>Job title (as defined by individual practitioner)</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
Lynn	18 years	2.5 years	Manager	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education
Rowena	6+ years	2 years	Deputy Manager	HND (Higher National Diploma) in Care and Early Years
Shirley	2 months	2 months	Unsure of title	None
Sam	In the UK 2 years but taught English in Italy for several years (early years to postgraduate)	2 years	Pre-school Practitioner	Foundation Degree in Early Years; Studying for BA in Educational Studies
Natasha	5 years	1 year	Not sure	HND (Higher National Diploma) in Care and Early Years
Harriet	2 years	2 years	Early years practitioner	Studying for NVQ3 Level 3 in Early Years and Education; BA Degree in German/Russian
Bella	5 years	8 months	Nursery nurse	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education



**Table 6.11: Practitioners' personal and biographical details (Setting 3: Kent urban)**

<b>Practitioner</b>	<b>How long working in ECEC</b>	<b>How long working at this setting</b>	<b>Job title (as defined by individual practitioner)</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
Louise	20 years (with breaks in between when living abroad)	20 years (with breaks in between when living abroad)	Manager	NVQ Level 4 in Early Years and Education
Anna	13 years	13 years	Deputy Manager	NVQ Level 2 and 3 in Early Years and Education
Naomi	2.9 years	2.9 years	Nursery nurse assistant	NVQ Level 2 and 3 in Early Years and Education
Mel	2 years	2 years	Nursery assistant	NVQ Level 2 in Early Years and Education; Studying for Level 3
Glenda	5 years	5 years (2.5 years paid)	Assistant Helper	None
Fran	5.3 years	5.3 years	Nursery assistant with Keyworker role	Health and Social Care (Foundation/Intermediate/Advanced); NVQ Level 2 in Early Years and Education
Felicity	2 months	1 year	Nursery Assistant and Cleaner	Preparing to study for NVQ Level 2 in Early Years and Education
Alma	4 years	4 years	Secretary	None
Esther	4 years	4 years	Senior nursery assistant	NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education; Studying for Early Years BA Degree
Sarah	9 years	9 years	Pre-school assistant	NVQ Level 2 in Early Years and Education; Preparing to study for NVQ Level 3 in Early Years and Education

**Table 6.12: Practitioners' personal and biographical details  
(Setting 4: Murcia coastal)**

<b>Practitioner</b>	<b>How long working in ECEC</b>	<b>How long working at this setting</b>	<b>Job title (as defined by individual practitioner)</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
Blanca	6 years	6 years	Owner/ Manager	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Laura	2.5 years	4.5 years	Educadora Infantil (Infant educator)	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Nadia	3 years	3 years	Educator of a class	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Alexia	3 years	2.5 years	Childhood educator	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Ava	8 months (6 of these spent in work placements)	2 months	Auxiliary	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Amalia	2.6 years	2.6 years	English teacher (Part-time)	None
Rubi	4 years	3 years	Educator	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Roberta	4 years	4 years	Educator	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Mariana	4 years	4 years	Educator	Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil
Lola	6 months (also 4 years teaching children to swim but this is physical not educational)	6 months in this placement	On work placement – studying	Studying for Técnico Superior en Educación Infantil; Técnica Infantil de medio acuático

**Table 6.13: Practitioners' personal and biographical details  
(Setting 5: Murcia urban)**

<b>Practitioner</b>	<b>How long working in ECEC</b>	<b>How long working at this setting</b>	<b>Job title (as defined by individual practitioner)</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
Felicia	23 years	17 years	Manager	Técnico Superior Educación Infantil; Maestra Educación Infantil
Paula	5 years	3 years	Teacher	Maestra Educación Infantil
Mara	15 years	8 years (supply work)	Infant Educator	Técnico Especialista en Educación Infantil
Eugenia	18 years	6 years	Educator	Magisterio Especialidad en Educación Infantil
Patricia	20 years	13 years	Educator	Maestra Educación Infantil
Marina	30 years	5 years	Educational Auxiliary	Educadora Infantil – Puericultura (babycare/ childcare); Auxiliar Educativo
Maribel	21 years	9 years (supply work)	Educator	Técnico Especialista y Maestra en Educación Infantil
Marcela	14 years	11 years	Profesora	Maestra Diplomada en Educación Infantil
Estafania	5 years	5 months	Maestra de Educación Infantil	Técnico Superior Educación Infantil; Maestra Educación Infantil

**Table 6.14: Practitioners' personal and biographical details  
(Setting 6: Murcia outskirts)**

Practitioner	How long working in ECEC	How long working at this setting	Job title (as defined by individual practitioner)	Qualifications
Monica	18 years	16 years	Manager	Profesora de Educación Infantil; Advanced courses
Miranda	32 years	32 years	Educator	Diplomada en Educación Infantil
Angelina	23 years	19 years	Técnico medio en educación y cultura (Maestra)	Diplomada en Educación Infantil
Alma	37 years	37 years	Educator	Técnico en jardín infancia
Azura	10 years	5 years	Técnico medio de educación y cultura (Tutora/maestra)	Diplomada en Educación Infantil
Esmeralda	32 years	29 years	Educator/ Tutor	Técnico en jardín de infancia

#### **The practitioners' backgrounds and their reasons for working with children**

As can be seen in Tables 6.9 - 6.11, the 23 Kent practitioners held a wide variety of childcare/education qualifications and many were in the process of working towards additional ones. Significantly, only five of them had chosen to work with young children directly after leaving school and all of these practitioners had experienced working in a variety of non-childcare/education environments such as banks, shops and bars. As illustrated in the following comment many of the Kent practitioners had changed their careers and entered into ECEC after having their own children:

Before I had my children I was a buyer...then when my youngest was born I went into care work with elderly people...my daughter started playgroup...they were keen for me to help as a mum's helper...I enjoyed it...it fitted in with my family...

(Kent Setting 1, Interview Jackie, 10.10.07)

The majority of Murcian practitioners were trained in '*Técnico Superior Educación Infantil*' (Two year vocational route) and/or '*Maestra Educación Infantil*' (Three year university route). During interviews, when discussing these two routes with Murcian practitioners, they all expressed a strong preference for either a practice-based training or a theory-based approach. In contrast to the Kent practitioners, only two of the Murcian practitioners had not commenced their careers in early childhood directly after leaving school. In explaining why they had chosen this particular career path, Murcian practitioners frequently spoke of their decision in terms of their affinity with young children, the rewards that this type of work brings and seemed to view working with children almost as a vocation:

Working with small children is very rewarding for me especially knowing that you have taught them things and...knowing that they have learnt this thanks to you...

(Murcia Setting 4, Interview Nadia, 05.02.08)

Differences in the Kent and Murcian practitioners' perceptions of their educational or nurturing roles became apparent when they were asked about these. Although many of the practitioners spoke of their role as a combination of teacher and carer, the Murcian practitioners predominantly described themselves as '*educadoras*'; putting particular stress on their roles as educators:

In *Educación infantil* everything is educational: we have to make sure that the children feel clean and comfortable, fostering his/her relationship with their equals and adults. We teach them to respect and share [the materials] with their companions...

(Murcia Setting 6, Interview Alma, 16.05.08)

On the other hand, the Kent practitioners, although reflecting upon the teaching aspects of their role, predominantly emphasised the caring aspects of their work:

[I see myself as a...] carer first and foremost really. I suppose we do some teaching...[Children]...learn their maths and...their colours...but there is not so much pressure on them...They...do it through learning through play rather than [practitioners] forcing them to do it...

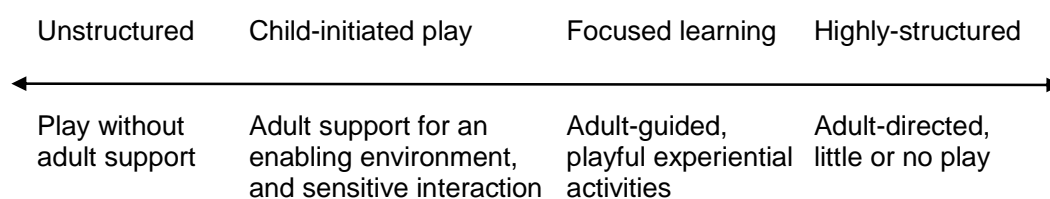
(Kent Setting 1, Interview Margaret, 02.10.07)

The Kent practitioners, as well as mentioning that their training had been useful to them, held a wider variety of personal beliefs that informed their child-rearing goals than the Murcian practitioners. These beliefs were reflective of the Kent practitioners' disparate training and entry routes into the early years profession. Consistent with this, Harkness and Super (2006) propose that caretakers' ethnotheories, about the kinds of activities or experiences that are most important in these formative years, are implicit in settings' daily routines. Accordingly, practitioners' individual characteristics such as their personality and educational background will influence how they organize children's everyday experiences (Harkness and Super, 1999, p.67). Therefore, I now provide information on these routines in the six pre-compulsory early years settings.

## **6.6 Daily routines at the six settings**

Within the overarching structure of national and/or local curricula, all of the settings in Kent and Murcia had a daily routine or timetable of activities. The full descriptions and timings of these routines at the six settings are attached in Appendix U. Dependent on the physical arrangement of the settings an overall routine could be applied to the whole of the setting. Where children were organised by age into separate rooms; these different spaces often had their own

individual schedules. As can be seen from the timetabled routines in Appendix U, the children's time spent in the six settings was underpinned by a range of highly-structured and unstructured activities. When observed in practice, these activities could be assigned along a continuum of approaches as illustrated in Figure 6.4.



**Figure 6.4: Continuum of approaches**  
**Source: Adapted from DCSF/QCDA (2009)**

The balance of these approaches was underpinned by the practitioners' pedagogy that informed their planning and organisation. To support my understanding of this concept in this context, I draw upon Stewart and Pugh's (2007) definition of pedagogy:

the understanding of how children learn and develop, and the practices through which we can enhance that process. It is rooted in values and beliefs about what we want for children, and supported by knowledge, theory and experience (p.7).

The level of structure inherent in each activity was dependent both on the practitioners' intention and the various levels of adult intervention. Although not immediately obvious in these written routines, observations of practice revealed that whole-class or group activities dominated the children's time at the Murcian settings. In contrast, the Kent practitioners' implementation of daily routines prioritised individual instruction and interactions over group activities. I now draw

upon some examples from each of the Murcian and Kent settings to illustrate how these routines impacted on their respective practices.

### **Murcian settings**

During a highly-structured activity, in the Murcian settings, the children worked with their class group in their *aula* (classroom) usually with one adult. Class groups ranged in size from eight children to 20+ children depending on age and setting (see Table 6.15, p. 240 for official ratios). A typical activity involved the whole class completing the same task from their individual workbooks as in the following example:

[After Nadia (the practitioner) has explained the activities to the 19 children who are sitting on the floor]...the children are told to sit down at the three tables...Nadia stands in front of the tables to demonstrate the first activity. She holds up a picture of two children (from the children's workbooks) each holding a hoop. The children have to colour one hoop in yellow and the other one red...the practitioner gives them a yellow crayon. All the children colour in the first hoop. They are then given a red crayon to colour in the second hoop... Some children say they have finished. When Nadia considers the picture is coloured in sufficiently she says '*Muy bien*' and the paper is collected by her...When all the children have coloured in their red and yellow hoops – they are given their masks of 'Topi' the class squirrel mascot and a small blob of red plasticine. Nadia moves around the tables putting a blob of glue...on the nose of each child's mask. Children stick the 'red nose' on to the blob of glue. Most children sit on their chairs as they have been told to do by Nadia. Some children wriggle...they are told by Nadia to sit still until everyone has finished.

(Murcia Setting 4, Written Observation, 29.01.08)



Other whole-class group activities led by Murcian practitioners included singing songs, reading a story, explaining an activity, and modelling with individually allocated small blobs of plasticine. On these occasions, children were told what to do by practitioners rather than being given a choice. The Murcian children spent considerable amounts of time sitting down. This could be when they were completing a structured activity, participating in daily assemblies or at storytime. In particular, the storytimes observed at the Murcian settings could last between 20 minutes and 45 minutes. Alexia at Setting 4 emphasises the importance of sitting down during these times, to a group of two- and three-year-olds, by referring to a poster on the wall:

Alexia shows the children a poster on the *aula* wall featuring a child sitting down and a child standing up – she says that they need to be like the child sitting down.

(Murcia Setting 4, Written Observation, 23.01.07)

The structure of activities, and availability of equipment in the temporal and spatial environments meant that the children in the Murcian settings had few opportunities to make decisions in relation to the activities they participated in and which resources they played with. Children were frequently allocated particular resources by practitioners, i.e. a small ball of plasticine. At other times they competed to play with shared equipment i.e. a box of bricks. Children's share of these resources such as construction toys, or malleable materials such as plasticine, or creative materials such as paint seemed (to me) to be restricted and meagre. This practice became evident in an observation undertaken of 19 two- and three-year-old children sharing 79 Duplo-type bricks (Murcia Setting 4, Written Observation, 29.01.08). In observations of several painting activities (Murcia

Settings 4 and 5, Written Observations, 22.01.08 and 24.04.08) children's fingers were dipped into a small pot of commercially produced fingerpaint, and manoeuvred to the paper by a practitioner. On completing the paintings, the children's hands were cleaned by a practitioner with a wet wipe.

The higher child-to-adult ratio in Murcia restricted the frequency of direct interactions with the children; especially when practitioners were preoccupied with a task. Examples included when children were arriving in the morning, when a practitioner was in the bathroom with individual children and when children were waiting between highly-structured activities (see Figure 6.4, p.230). At these times children selected an item from the limited resources available to them. In Settings 5 and 6 they played in one of the various *rincones* (corners) which included a book corner, ballpool and role-play area. On these occasions, the remaining children were left to amuse themselves and these scenes were reminiscent of children in the Netherlands, observed by Harkness and Super (1999), who they described as '...developing a remarkable capacity for entertaining themselves... independently' (p.82).

The Murcian practitioners explained how the ratio of children to adults increased their own workload, but could have benefits for the children. In their opinion, children were able to experience more freedom and autonomy, and to realise that both physical and human resources had to be shared. Roberta explained this point in her interview:

...when children first come here, they are accustomed to being held a lot and I have to say to the children 'I can't hold you all at once'. They have to become accustomed to becoming more independent...because you don't have enough arms to carry them all around all day... [For

example]...when we are changing them, we are with only one child...so you are interacting with one of them, not with all of them. The other children must play alone.

(Murcia Setting 4, Interview with Roberta, 22.01.08)

Opportunities for physical play (distinct from the *psicomotricidad* (physical development sessions)) were provided on a daily basis at the Murcian settings; outdoors if the weather was fine and indoors if the weather was inclement. During these periods, interactions between practitioners and children were minimal and children from all the *aulas* (classrooms) would share the play space. The following extract from my research diary describes how the structure in one of the Murcian settings sometimes descended into what I perceived as ‘chaos’:

I can’t quite believe what happened next...Alexia tips out box of small plastic bricks...and puts on CD of children’s Spanish songs. Most children squeal loudly and dance around the area near the mirror...Alexia takes the children to the bathroom individually and combs their hair (putting gel on and putting pigtails or bunches in girls’ hair). Out in the *aula*, blocks are being thrown by the children – hitting some of the children – several of the children are fighting. One child builds a large tower – some children take blocks over to the table. A mother arrives to collect child...and seems unperturbed by my perceived view of ‘chaos’. Alexia is still in the changing room styling children’s hair. After 15 minutes Alexia asks the children to collect the bricks – several bricks fly through the air – just missing hitting me and the other children.

(Extract from Research Diary: Murcia Setting 4, 16.01.08)

This observation was reminiscent of what Brougère, Guénif-Souilamas and Rayna, (2008), in referring to the structure of the French *école maternelle*, describe as ‘...a chaotic world in contrast to classroom order...where children are

free from adult pressure, where they resolve the problems they come up against’ (p.376).

There were also frequent occasions where the Murcian children were observed ‘milling around’ without any apparent focus or supervision from practitioners. This was particularly notable in Murcia Setting 4 as recorded in my Research Diary (17.01.08). Consequently, in the Murcian settings, practitioners’ organisation of activities and allocation of resources resulted in two very different experiences for children. These alternated between working individually on a whole group task to the self-regulatory and cooperative behaviour required when negotiating a limited number of resources with their peers. Therefore, it could be said that children in Murcia had more ‘opportunities to learn how to function as members of a group’ (Tobin *et al.*, 2009, p.243) and to play independently.

### **Kent settings**

On the other hand, in the three Kent settings, play equipment and resources such as playdough and paint, and collage materials were abundant and plentiful. Practitioners emphasised the importance of setting up a wide variety of resources and small group activities from which the children could choose. In particular, practitioners at Kent Setting 1 dedicated a considerable amount of time to setting up and clearing away a wealth of resources each day. Practitioners frequently worked on a one-to-one basis with the children or in small groups. Occasionally children were organised by age to undertake focused learning activities (see Figure 6.4, p.230), for example, playing a board game. As indicated in the following extract from an interview with Esther, practitioners emphasised the importance of children’s individual choice:

I mean we've got our daily routine but only in the loosest sense of the term...at snacktime ...[children] just come and go as they want...I think sitting them all down at ten o'clock altogether is wrong...they're not ready for it...at storytime they've got the option. If they don't want to sit they just go off next door ...I just don't understand why it is important...to make a child do something they do not want to do.

(Kent Setting 3, Interview Esther, 12.12.07)

Although practitioners at Setting 1 sometimes organised a whole group craft activity, most whole group activities at the Kent settings were confined to storytime, circle time and singing time, and rarely lasted more than 15 minutes. The two Kent settings (Setting 2 and 3) with outdoor play areas did not have set times for using these spaces. At Setting 3, children had free access to the outdoor space during most sessions; making it an extension of the indoor space. However, as noted in this observation of the children using the indoor area at Setting 3, there were always several practitioners, both indoors and outdoors, monitoring and joining in with the children's play:

In Room Two children are involved in a variety of activities with and without practitioners. Two children are playing with the trains and track – a third child joins them. Child is playing next to them alone with plastic farm animals. Two children are at a table with Naomi drawing and cutting – she is helping them to make envelopes for their creations. Louise is playing in the 'Home Corner' with three children. Anna is at a table with three children building with some 'wooden puzzle blocks'. Fran enters into room to look for children who have not yet completed their Christmas cards. Anna momentarily leaves the room and the children at the table she has left start to disagree. Louise comments 'It falls apart when an adult isn't there'.

(Kent Setting 3, Written Observation, 05.12.07)

As demonstrated in this example, the children in the Kent settings had fewer opportunities to play independently away from the presence of adults than the children in the Murcian settings. Even in activities where the practitioners said they made a concerted attempt not to become involved in the children's play, children were still under surveillance from practitioners. This links to Duffy's suggestion (Duffy, 2011), referring to English early years settings, that there is an expectation that children should be busy all the time. This practice is also indicative of a child-centred model that implies the permanent supervision of a teacher (Brougère *et al.*, 2008).

## **6.7 Summary of Sections 6.0 – 6.6**

There were many similarities in the written curricular documents that underpinned the practices at the Murcian and Kent settings. The differences (and similarities) in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices between the Murcian and Kent settings became visible in the practitioners' implementation of their respective curricular documents and schemes. These curricula were underpinned by a predominantly developmentally appropriate view of young children's learning (Bredekamp and Copple, 1987; Hoffman, 2000). Four notable factors emerged in my analysis of the practices and interactions that impacted on relationships between practitioners and children at these six settings:

Firstly, the physical environments of the Murcian settings were identifiable by their fewer resources than the Kent settings.

Secondly, there was not the same demarcation between highly-structured activities and unstructured activities in the Kent settings; as in the Murcian

settings. Therefore, the activities in the Kent settings could be located in the centre of the continuum diagram (see Figure 6.4, p. 230) predominating between child-initiated play and focused learning. In contrast, the majority of activities in the Murcian settings would be placed at each end of the continuum alternating between an unstructured and a highly-structured approach.

Thirdly, group activities were prioritised at the Murcian settings in comparison to the Kent settings where children's individual learning needs and development tended to be given precedence.

Fourthly, individual interactions between practitioners and children occurred less often in the Murcian settings in comparison to the Kent settings. The higher child-adult ratio in the Murcian settings impacted upon the frequency and type of these interactions. Consequently, the ratio of children to adults was a factor in dictating the level of adult supervision that children received.

To indicate how these adult-child interactions, relationships and practices became evident in the six settings' daily routines I have chosen to focus on three overarching themes that emerged from my data.

## **6.8 The themes**

In this section I focus on three themes. These themes were chosen because they had the potential to be reflected in broader societal attitudes to young children. They comprise the comparative emphases practitioners gave to valued behaviours including:

- Risk, safety and resilience;
- Affective physical interactions;
- Behaviour management: the promotion of social norms.

These three themes were all underpinned by the relative importance that practitioners gave to encouraging children's independence and autonomy; making choices and playing alone, and children's relatedness to others. They were informed by my research questions, the literature review (Chapter 4), and from an inductive analysis of the data resulting from observations, interviews and research diary entries (see Chapter 5).

## **6.9 Risk, safety and resilience**

Adults' concern about achieving a balance between risk and safety for children was a salient issue in my review of mass media sources (see Chapter 2) and in my literature review (see Chapter 4). Arguments abound in the literature regarding adults' fear of risk and how concerns about surplus safety impinge on children's lives (Wyver *et al.*, 2010). A consensus prevails in this ongoing debate that risk-taking, when managed appropriately, can result in positive outcomes (Little, *n.d.*; Little, Wyver and Gibson, 2011). Indeed, the concept of risk appears to be socially constructed, and may vary across contexts, within and across cultures (Madge and Barker, 2007; Little, *n.d.*; Little *et al.*, 2011). D.M. Hoffman (2010) suggests that comparative work has the potential to illuminate different ways of negotiating risk and resilience in different contexts. I now give some indication of how the concepts of risk, safety and resilience were perceived, managed and regulated by practitioners in the six settings.

### **Regulatory environments**

Whilst practitioners at all six settings endeavoured to keep children safe both physically and emotionally, these practices differed in the Murcian and Kent



settings. Additionally, practitioners operated within contrasting constraints of external inspection regimes and the requirements of different adult-to-child ratios. As aforementioned, adult and child interactions were influenced by the adult-to-child ratios which varied between Kent (DCSF, 2008b) and Murcia (UGT-FETE (2009); Región de Murcia (CARM) (2010e). Details of the legally stipulated ratios can be found in Table 6.15.

**Table 6.15: Adult to child ratios in early years settings in Kent and Murcia**

Kent: Age of child	Adult: Child Ratio	Murcia: Age of Child	Adult: Child Ratio
Under two years	1:3	0 – 1 years	1:8
Two years	1:4	1 – 2 years	1:13
Three years +	1:8 (practitioners without qualified teacher status (QTS)); 1:13 (practitioners with QTS and another)	2 – 3 years	1:20
Four years +	1:30 (practitioners with QTS)	3 – 4 years +	1:25

**Sources: (DCSF, 2008b); UGT-FETE (2009); (CARM) (2010)**

The Kent practitioners' preoccupation with safety was linked to their health and safety expectations of *The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Care (Ofsted)* inspections (Ofsted, 2011). In particular, practitioners at Setting 1, due for an inspection, made frequent references to the requirements of *Ofsted* during sessions. For example, Carol made the point of ensuring that the children's drinking water was in a visible but not precarious position in case an *Ofsted* inspector turned up unexpectedly (Kent Setting 1, Written Observation, 18.10.07). Carol explained how '...a spilled jug of water could lead to children falling over, never mind getting wet...' (Research Diary, 18.10.07). Setting 1 was located next door to a day centre for vulnerable adults. Practitioners and parents were concerned about being so close to this centre with regard to children's safety.

Their concerns prevented children from accessing the outdoor play area and created problems with the setting's *Ofsted* inspections:

It's sad that we don't have an outdoors...When we originally opened we used the back garden...but we had a lot of concern from parents. We have to think about child safety and all those issues...It's always a problem with Ofsted though. They say it's OK if you set the large play toys out in here and take the children out and then they turn round and penalise us for not having an outdoor area.

(Kent Setting 1, Interview Jackie, 10.10.07)

On the other hand, Murcia Setting 4 appeared to have a more relaxed approach to inspections than the Kent settings. In an initial visit to the setting Blanca (the owner/manager) said that, '...they were inspected but had been open five years and had not yet had an inspection except for a hygiene one'. Blanca emphasised that she would like an inspection but pointed out that the local authority in Murcia were *tranquilado y relajado* (translated as 'laid-back') (Extract from Research Diary, Initial visit, 26.10.07).

A similar casual attitude to inspections pervaded from practitioners in Murcian Settings 5 and 6. Practitioners explained they had annual inspections from '*El Equipo de Atención Temprana de la Conserjería de Educación*'. Felicia, manager from Setting 5, said that they were subject to many inspections including fire, hygiene and one that looked at the educational provision. However, Felicia said she was not anxious about these inspections (Informal chat, Research Diary, 28.04.08).

In summary, Kent practitioners were more likely to express their anxiety about external accountability and safety requirements than the Murcian practitioners. Consequently, it is likely that practitioners' concern about these factors impacted

on their pedagogical decision making (Little, *n.d.*, Little *et al.*, 2011) with regard to risk-taking and safety.

### **Kent ‘safe havens’**

As exemplified in the following statement, the provision of a safe and secure environment was named as a key priority for Kent practitioners:

One of the most important things our setting can offer is to make sure [children] are safe and secure.

(Kent Setting 1, Interview Heather, 17.10.07)

Kent practitioners viewed their settings as warm, safe, caring environments, or as described by the following practitioner – a ‘little haven’ (providing protection to children from the outside world):

I sometimes think of [the setting] as being like a little haven... so that when they come in and if they’ve had a fight with mum or something horrible has happened they feel safe...

(Kent Setting 2, Interview Sam, 06.11.07)

Sam’s comment was resonant with New, Mardell and Robinson’s (2005) discussion of cultural interpretations of early childhood environments as both physically and emotionally safe havens (p.1). Consequently, the Kent settings were viewed by practitioners as spaces in which children could play safely and securely. These spaces enabled children to be protected from the ‘perceived and real’ negative effects of the outside world or what James and Prout (2008) describe as ‘corrupt adult society’ (p.238). Equally, Kent practitioners’ views

seemed to be informed by a notion that young children are vulnerable and in need of protection (Waller, 2006).

Kent practitioners' desire to protect children became evident during the sessions. Children were consistently monitored by practitioners. The higher ratio of adults to children at the Kent settings seemed to hamper the fostering of children's independence by restricting their freedom. For example, at Setting 2, Shirley spent one hour supervising the children who came along to play on the trampoline. In the absence of any children she moved away but rushed back immediately when children headed towards the trampoline (Kent Setting 2, Written Observation, 15.11.07).

If a child fell over at any of the Kent settings, or sustained any injury, the incident however minor, was noted in an 'Accident book' (Research Diary, 28.09.07; 20.11.07; 10.12.07). Maintaining these records was a requirement of the EYFS Statutory Framework (DCSF, 2008b, p.26).

### **Murcian environments for developing independence**

In referring to parental attitudes about child-rearing, the issue of over-protection and how this subsequently impacted on children's developing independence was a recurring theme in the Murcian practitioners' responses. Practitioners linked the notion of over-protection to parents' 'excessive spoiling and pampering' of their children. As emphasised by Roberta, these practices could have short and long term consequences for children:

[In Murcia]...the children are very overprotected by the family and...parents. The children take a long time to become independent from the family and the teacher... [O]utside of Spain...they aren't as nervous for the children...young children have more independence

and later when they have to stay somewhere it's not as hard for them...[T]he late developing Spaniards...always have the protection of...the mother, or father or someone in the family...when you leave them with someone different [they] find it very hard. It's very noticeable when they bring the children here, during the first few months there are loads of tears...they find it very hard to settle.

(Setting 4, Interview Roberta, 22.01.08)

The Murcian practitioners thought that their settings should react to this parental approach to child-rearing by providing less restrictive environments. In these environments, children should be helped to develop qualities such as independence and resilience, that from the practitioners' perspective, parents were preventing their children from acquiring. In contrast to Little's (*n.d.*), assertion that high child-adult ratios contribute to minimising opportunities for risk-taking play (p.1), at the Murcian settings these high ratios afforded children to have more freedom. This practice appeared to be intentional rather than being a consequence of lower practitioner ratios. In turn, Murcian practitioners thought that children should be given freedom to play outdoors, on the patio, without adult intervention to allow them opportunities to interact with peers (Murcia Setting 4, Blanca, 31.01.08). This view became evident in my observation of outdoor play on the patio at Setting 3:

I am sitting on a bench on the patio. It is almost like being in a public park or playground. Children are rolling on the floor covering their hands, hair and clothes with the fine orange dusty sand, they climb under the metal waste paper bins. No-one seems to mind. The children seem to have more freedom (than in the Kent settings). There are swings and the children push each other on them without any interference from practitioners...who watch from the sidelines.

(Murcia Setting 3, Written Observation and Extract from Research Diary, 28.04.08)

Accompanying the non-interventionist, unstructured approach (see Figure 6.4, p.230) of Murcian practitioners, were less risk averse practices. Consequently, safety factors appeared to be less of a concern for practitioners when the children were playing in large outdoor and indoor spaces. For example, practitioners seemed to be unaware of the hazards that broken toys (as perceived by myself) may present (Murcia Setting 4, Written observation, 31.01.08). When Murcian children fell over, practitioners demonstrated little anxiety. Alternatively, the children were told to get up again - '*Arriba*' (Extract from Research Diary, Murcia Setting 5, 24.04.08) or not to worry - '*No pasa nada*' (Extract from Research Diary, Murcia Setting 6, 08.05.08). Although, all the Murcian outdoor play areas had some safety surfaces, their indoor communal play areas had tiled floors and I witnessed several falls as in the following example:

In the passageway to the outdoor patio a child falls quite heavily against the entrance door and on to the tiled floor. She is quickly hoisted up by Roberta and Vera. *Arnica* cream is put on her head – it is quite a large bump. No accident book is produced. Child carries on playing.

(Extract from Research Diary, Murcia Setting 4, 07.02.08)

Murcian practitioners, when asked about children's accidents (Research Diary: 07.02.08; 24.04.08; 08.05.08) maintained that children needed to learn how to deal with the natural occurrence of falling over, and thus develop resilience.

In summary, there appeared to be evidence of conflicting interpretations between the Murcian and Kent settings about what constituted risk (New *et al.*,

2005), what was considered safe for children and to what extent children should develop resilience. As discussed in the next section, the interplay between the different ratios in Murcia and Kent, and the personal beliefs of the practitioners also impacted on their affective physical interactions with children.

### **6.10: Affective physical interactions**

Affective physical interactions (defined as touching, hugging, kissing, stroking, handholding etc.) between adults and children have received much attention in the research literature (see Chapter 4). As noted in these sources, a tension between a belief that children need to be touched and a fear of the dangers related to touching children has emerged (Piper and Stronach, 2008; Owen and Gillentine, 2011). In the UK context, the latter point has been linked to stringent child protection policies (Furedi and Bristow, 2008). However, some commentators note that affective physical interactions may be underpinned by cultural differences (Piper and Smith, 2003; Piper, Powell and Smith, 2006) and write of ‘touching’ and ‘non-touching cultures’ (Hold-Cavell, Attili and Schleidt, 1986).

In this section, I report on affective physical interactions; including touching behaviours in the Murcian and Kent settings.

#### **Personal care routines**

One of the most frequently mentioned times for interacting with the children by the Murcian practitioners was when assisting children with personal care routines (defined by practitioners as cleaning teeth, brushing/styling hair, feeding):

The interactions are most valuable in the times of personal toileting, eating... That is when the relationship is most individual – on a one-to-one basis.

(Murcia Setting 5, Interview Marina, 14.05.08)

My observations of these interactions demonstrated the extent of physical affection between adults and children inherent within these routines, indicating a comfort with touch and with the body (Tobin *et al.*, 2009). One-to-one interactions were evident at all three Murcian settings, when practitioners spent significant amounts of time each day brushing, combing and styling the children's hair. This involved putting gel on to the boys' hair and arranging the girls' hair into pigtails and ponytails. Cologne was also regularly sprayed on to the child's hair and faces. The children were then encouraged to admire themselves in the large mirrors that were a significant feature of all the Murcian *aulas*:

In *Aula 2*, Roberta is grooming children's hair - other child watches. Roberta asks her, 'Would you like to be *'guapa'* too?' Child said she would. Roberta then grooms her hair too. Practitioners Roberta and Vera tell the children how *'guapa/o'* they look.

(Murcia Setting 4, Written Observation, 07.02.08)

Several of the children had their hair sprayed with scented water to make them look like *'princesas'*. Judging by the children's eagerness to have their hair brushed and sprayed and their smiling faces, this is something that they enjoy...

(Extract from Research Diary, Murcia Setting 6, 23.04.08)

Notably, the Murcian practitioners dedicated at least an hour each day to enhancing children's physical appearance and highlighting the importance of doing so:



It is 3.00 pm. The children return to the *aula* after their siesta. The children are sitting on the photos on the floor in a semi-circle. Angelina is sitting on a chair at the front. She asks the children, ‘What happens if we don’t brush our hair?’ The children join in with Angelina to answer the question, ‘We will be *fea/feo* (ugly)!’ Children get up from their photos and go over to Angelina one by one whilst she brushes their hair. As each child gets their hair brushed, Angelina asks the rest of the children if he/she is *feo/fea* (ugly) or *guapo/guapa* (handsome/pretty). *Colonia* (cologne) is squirted on to the children’s hands and hair, Angelina asks a child, ‘What do you smell like?’ The child replies ‘Like a princess’. She asks another child, ‘What are you missing?’ He says, ‘*Colonia de una princesa*’. The rest of the children sit quietly and watch whilst they wait for their turn.

(Murcia Setting 6, Written Observation, 25.04.08)

No equivalent examples, of these personal grooming and preening incidents, were observed in the Kent settings. In turn, Kent practitioners seemed to put less emphasis on praising or improving children’s physical appearance.

#### **Touch: hugging, kissing, cuddling...**

Affective child and adult relations as defined by touching, kissing, hugging and cuddling were observed on a daily basis at all six settings.

#### ***Kent settings***

It was interesting to note that the Kent practitioners drew attention to the fact that not everyone may be comfortable with freely displaying affective behaviour with children:

...We’re very cuddly here – I’m sure you’ve been in places where they wouldn’t touch the children – it’s not like that here – we get down on the floor with them and sit them on our knees. I behave towards and treat the

children exactly the same as I would my own...They can always come for a cuddle to me – there is nothing untoward with that.

(Kent Setting 1, Interview Jackie, 10.10.07)

...I think after having lived in Italy I think I am very tactile and I'm not sure how much that might be frowned on in this country but I am afraid it's something I can't help.

(Kent Setting 2, Interview Sam, 06.11.07)

...there's nothing wrong with giving them a cuddle...there's some days they just want to snuggle in and have a story and some cuddling.

(Kent Setting 3, Interview Esther, 12.12.07)

As demonstrated in the above interview extracts, Kent practitioners emphasised the importance of demonstrating affection to the children by hugging and kissing them. However, they appeared to feel a need to justify the intention of this physical affection. Notwithstanding this justification, my observations of practitioners and children in the Kent settings provided evidence of affective physical interactions throughout the sessions. For example, children regularly sat on practitioners' laps 'just for a cuddle' (Research Diary, 27.09.07; 06.11.07; 12.12.07). Sitting a child on a lap could also be for a specific purpose, for example, if a child was upset or could be used as a strategy during a group activity such as storytime to encourage sitting down:

At storytime, most of the new children are sitting on practitioners' laps – some of the older children also want to 'sit on laps' – so many of the practitioners have at least one child on their lap.

(Kent Setting 1, Written Observation, 25.09.07)

Some of the children in the Kent settings expressed their affection for the practitioners. This expression of affection could be physical; by hugging and kissing practitioners on arrival at the setting (Kent Setting 3, Written Observation, 29.11.07) or when going home at the end of sessions (Kent Setting 2, Written Observation, 06.11.07). Children also expressed their affection for practitioners verbally:

There are six children sitting down at the table, having their lunch, with three practitioners. One of the children says to Rowena “I love you”.

(Kent Setting 2, Written Observation, 30.10.07)

Affective physical interactions were not just observed between adults and children, the practitioners at Setting 1 regularly hugged each other:

There are lots of hugs between practitioners; they speak of being a close knit team and emphasise how this friendship underpins the ethos of the group. They also discuss how they support each other outside of the group by sharing the care of each other’s children.

(Kent Setting 1, Extract from Research Diary, 18.10.07)

### ***Murcian settings***

At the Murcian settings, the children did not sit on the laps of practitioners during activities such as storytime. Instead children sat on chairs, on the floor or on their floor photographs (at Setting 6). When asked to share their key priorities for the children that attended their settings, few Murcian practitioners mentioned the importance of being affectionate with children. However, consistent with Penn’s (1997) observations of Spanish nurseries, in the Murcian settings I observed many

affective exchanges between children and practitioners, and between adults. I was also frequently squeezed and kissed by both adults and children. Support staff, including auxiliaries, cooks, cleaners; who worked in all three Murcian settings, also displayed their affection freely with the children:

In the kitchen/dining area, the cook helps to feed the children, often giving them kisses, in between spoonfuls of food.

(Murcia Setting 4, Written Observation, 23.01.08)

The notion of affection between adults and children also emerged as the focus of a structured activity at Murcia Setting 4 as part of the published scheme used by the setting:

At the daily assembly Roberta uses two puppets (a child and granddad) to show the children how they kiss each other. She introduces the activity that they are going to complete from their activity books which involves putting a kiss on the grandfather. To do so, she puts red lipstick on her lips and kisses the picture of the grandfather. In the activity that follows, Roberta puts lipstick on the individual children's lips and they subsequently kiss their pictures of the grandfather...

(Murcia Setting 4, Written Observation, and Transcript of Video Recording, 07.02.08, 31.10 – 34.59)

This activity was not an isolated example; Murcian children were often invited to give cuddly toys and puppets a hug or a kiss in group '*asambleas*' (assemblies) (Research Diary, 30.10.08; 23.04.08; 15.05.08).

### **Summary of Section 6.10**

Examples of affective physical interactions were observed at all six settings on a daily basis. At the Kent settings, these interactions were visible throughout the sessions regardless of the activity. However, at the Murcian settings, practitioners

were less likely to interact physically with children during highly-structured activities (see Figure 6.4, p.230). Nevertheless, the nature of some activities required children to display affective behaviours with inanimate objects such as toys. The grooming and preening interactions inherent in personal care routines observed at the Murcian settings, but absent in the Kent settings were also worthy of comment because of their uniqueness.

The Kent practitioners' tended to defend the essentiality of physical contact in children's personal, social and emotional development (Piper and Stronach, 2008). Practitioners' apparent necessity to do so could have been symptomatic of anxieties about child protection and the fear of litigation; which underpin how and when it is appropriate to touch a child (Moss and Petrie, 2002). In contrast, the Murcian practitioners seemed to view physical interactions and behaviours as naturally occurring phenomena that needed no rationalisation or what Tobin *et al.*, (2009) describe as an 'absence of concern' (p.116). Notwithstanding the impact of additional mitigating factors such as adult-to-child ratios and practitioners' pedagogical intentions, some of these contrasting affective physical interactions could be linked to cultural differences.

### **6.11 Behaviour management strategies: the promotion of social norms**

This theme focuses on the strategies that practitioners used to encourage desired and discourage undesired examples of children's behaviour. The management of children's behaviour, and the respective strategies employed varied between the individual settings. Strategies reflected practitioners' agreed levels of tolerance of children's behaviour, the types of behaviour they prioritised and how they conceptualised obedience. Certain strategies were related to the particular

behavioural problems that settings had experienced. For example, Kent Setting 3 had several children with behavioural problems referred to them, from other settings unable to cope with the behaviour of these children. Similarly, Kent Setting 1 had experienced what they described as high levels of unwanted behaviour from the children who had now moved on to school the previous term.

### **Valued behaviours: social norms**

Promoting good manners, turn-taking and sharing were key priorities for the Kent practitioners. As highlighted by Anna at Kent Setting 3, ‘...we’re always saying to children - you’ve forgotten that one important word haven’t you?’ (Kent Setting 3, Interview Anna, 06.12.07). At the Kent settings, children were reminded by practitioners to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ throughout the sessions. Likewise, after eating their lunch, at Setting 2, children were also expected to ask the practitioners before they left the table. On one occasion a child stood up, left the table and came back to the table as she had remembered that she needed to ask if she could leave the table (Kent Setting 2, Written Observation, 14.11.07). When children displayed desired behaviours practitioners praised them verbally:

At the gluing table three children say ‘We’re sharing’. Jackie responds by saying ‘Sharing’s good – sharing’s excellent – we like sharing’.

(Kent Setting 1, Written Observation, 17.10.07)

As a strategy for encouraging sharing and fairness at Setting 1, timers were used to measure how long individual children had spent using favoured resources (such as computers and bikes) and to signal when other children could have a turn (Kent Setting 1, Written Observations, 18.10.07). Consequently, this strategy placed the

onus on a practitioner-controlled inanimate object rather than encouraging children to take control or find their own solutions.

Stickers were used at Settings 1 and 2 to reward a range of positive behaviours:

Jackie gave stickers to the children who joined in the Bear Hunt Activity saying '*You* can have a sticker because you didn't run around – but *you* can't because you ran around in my 'Bear Hunt'.

(Kent Setting 1, Written Observation, 17.10.07)

At the Murcian settings, no external material rewards were given to children for demonstrating desirable behaviours. Equally, turn-taking appeared to be less of an issue in the Murcian settings and I rarely observed practitioners encouraging this norm. In the event of a dispute over a resource, Murcian practitioners reminded the children that the toys at the setting did not belong to them, 'The toys at the *colé* are for everyone and belong to no-one' (Extract from Research Diary, Murcia Setting 6, 30.04.08).

### **Rules**

All six settings had implicit and explicit rules; some written and some verbal, communicating the types of behaviours that practitioners wanted to encourage and discourage. In response to past problems with children's behaviour, practitioners at Setting 1 displayed posters to inform parents and children about the types of behaviours that they wanted to discourage and to encourage:

On the wall, below the stage, are several 'made' posters that were a result of last year's 'problems with children's behaviour'. These feature photographs and sad/happy faces noting:

We are kind ☺  
 We share toys ☺  
 Teeth are for food **not** [name of setting] friends  
 Hitting and kicking is **not** [name of setting] friends and makes us sad  
 Lets be nice [name of setting] friends ☺  
 We all have feelings – happy, sad, angry, afraid, proud, tired, jealous ☺

(Kent Setting 1, Extract from Research Diary, 26.09.07)

Two of the Murcian settings had long lists of rules (*normas*) in their planning for the individual *aulas*. The following is an excerpt from Setting 5, *Aula 2*, Practitioner Estafania's '*Protocolo de Actuación*' (which included rules for the *aula*, bathroom, patio, dining room and *siesta*):

#### **Rules for the *Aula***

- No hitting, pushing or biting. If we have a problem with a companion we must tell the teacher;
- Help companions with a task such as putting on their jacket...

These rules differed between *aulas*. For example, in *Aula 6*, Eugenia's rules for her *aula* included:

#### **Rules for the *Aula***

- Care for the materials and resources;
- Speak but don't shout;
- Don't draw on the walls or tables with crayons or chalks...

Before participating in a '*Psicomotor*' activity, a planned physical development activity using coloured toilet rolls that the children had been asked to bring in from home, Esmeralda at Setting 6, (Written observation, 30.04.08) discussed the rules that needed to be observed by the children before going into the '*Psicomotor*' room. Esmeralda's verbal rules included: "No pushing; No taking



off shoes; No ripping the (toilet) paper; When the music begins we take a toilet roll; No breaking the rules”.

During the sessions at the Kent settings, practitioners reminded children about rules such as not bringing playdough to the computer (Kent Setting 1, Written Observation, 17.10.07) or not taking scissors away from the ‘cutting-out table’ (Kent Setting 3, Written Observation, 27.11.07).

As can be seen in the next two sections practitioners drew upon various sanctions to deal with children who did not conform to these rules.

## **Sanctions**

### ***Interventionist strategies***

Throughout the sessions, Kent practitioners reminded children about the types of behaviours that were expected, and advised children of the consequences of not conforming to these expectations. For example at Setting 1, children were often told by practitioners that they would not be able to play with popular toys such as bikes if they did not do as requested:

Two children are running around the room – another child joins them.

Jackie: ‘Don’t chase the boys – it’s not good’. Children continue to run. Judy: ‘Listen to what Jackie just said to you. If you don’t stop you won’t have a bike’.

(Kent Setting 1, Written Observation, 09.10.07)

At Setting 3 Esther uses an external threat to try to stop a child kicking:

Child is kicking the floor at storytime, Esther says, ‘Stop kicking or I am going to phone nanny and tell her not to take you to London’.

(Kent Setting 3, Written Observation, 27.11.07)

On the other hand, practitioners reacted to children's unwanted behaviour by explaining why they should not display this type of behaviour and offering alternative ways of playing or using equipment:

[At the large floor sandpit children are throwing the sandplay equipment] Mel: 'We are not throwing things, it's dangerous'. One child continues. Mel: 'What did I just say? You can move it [the sand] around but don't get it in people's eyes'. Children are pretending to shoot each other using rakes and spades. Glenda calls over from table where she is sitting to children in sandpit, 'Are you being careful?' Mel: 'Try and keep the sand in the sandpit. Boys we are not playing guns. Why not use these diggers and make a road with them?'

(Kent Setting 3, Written Observation, 27.11.07)

Practitioners sometimes intervened to help children share resources:

In the main playroom a child takes another child's 'baby in a car seat', the first child begins to cry. Rowena asks the child who has taken the baby to give it back to her. The child does. Rowena tells her 'There are other dolls you know'.

(Kent Setting 2, Written Observation, 31.10.07)

Overall, interventional behaviour management strategies used by the Murcian practitioners, especially at Setting 4, seemed to me to be harsher than those employed by the Kent practitioners:

A child is in trouble because he has torn one of the small photographs down from the wall poster. He has also knocked down a chair and is told by Alexia to sit on his own – starting off in the corner and then on a chair at the table – she tells him off quite sternly that he is has been '*muy malo*' (very naughty) and that she is '*enfadada*' (angry) with him.

(Extract from Research Diary, Murcia Setting 4, 16.01.08)

Another strategy for dealing with unwanted behaviour at the Murcian settings was to send children into other *aulas* (Setting 4) and to send them out of their own *aulas* into the communal area (Setting 5). Setting 6 had a '*Banco Amarillo*' (This 'yellow bench' served the same function as a '*naughty chair*'). The underlying objectives for these sanctions were viewed by practitioners, as serving two key purposes; to discourage repeat instances of these behaviours and to protect the rest of the group from disturbances. Discussion of children's individual demeanours also featured in the end of session whole-group *asambleas* which served as a debriefing of the day; similar to the ones described by Tobin *et al.*, (2009) in their observations of Chinese preschool settings.

### ***Non-interventionist strategies***

Practitioners, from both Kent and Murcia, said that they sometimes avoided becoming involved in children's conflicts and disagreements as they felt it was beneficial for children to learn how to deal with these without adult intervention (Kent Setting 2, Interview Lynn, 22.11.07; Murcia Setting 5, Interview Patricia, 09.05.08). When employing these strategies, practitioners would observe but not intervene. For example:

Two children are having a disagreement over a toy car. Practitioner Sarah looks over but watches the two children sort out the argument between themselves.

(Kent Setting 3, Written Observation, 27.11.07)

Kent practitioners also highlighted the safety aspects that needed to be considered before standing back and encouraging children to deal with their own conflicts:

...if they are falling out with each other a bit – sometimes it is better to step back and let them see if they can sort it out – you can sometimes make it worse by interfering – but it depends if anyone is in danger...  
(Kent Setting 2, Interview Bella, 07.11.07)

In interviews, the majority of Murcian practitioners emphasised the importance of allowing children to resolve their own conflicts. Consistent with their responses, I observed numerous occasions when practitioners did not become involved in children's conflicts or did not intervene in, what I perceived as, potentially risky situations:

On the outdoor patio children are mainly left to sort out their own disputes. Many children have been squabbling over the wheeled toys but practitioners do not encourage turn-taking. Today during a squabble a child fell off a wheeled toy and hit his head on the hard floor. The practitioner told him to get up and patted him on the head.  
(Murcia Setting 4, Extract from Research Diary, 31.01.08)

Thus, the Murcian practitioners' laid-back approach to becoming involved in children's disputes appeared to be linked to their relaxed attitude to children's involvement in accidents, and their assessment of risk. Rather than being seen as providing a 'lack of care', this could be viewed as a strategy for helping children to develop resilience in adverse situations. This non-interventionist approach was reminiscent of Tobin *et al.*, (2009) observations of Japanese teachers balancing risk against the loss of valuable social experiences in similar situations. Thus, with minimal adult involvement these children were being given opportunities to learn and develop with greater autonomy (Hoffman, 2010).

One of the Murcian practitioners reflected on how she changed from displaying affective or childlike behaviour to adopting an authoritative role in order to manage children's behaviour:

I have learnt that sometimes you are with them as ‘a child’, playing alongside them, as their friend but there are other times...when you have to be strict and authoritative, and then they see you like ‘Uh oh, watch out!’. Children see you like an adult-child, like ‘Little girl, we all play together but when I am serious, you have to listen to me.’

(Setting 4, Interview with Lola, 22.01.08)

Lola’s response was typical of how Murcian practitioners’ tended to interchange between informally displaying affection for the children and then formally disciplining them in an authoritative (high involvement with high demands) or, at times, an authoritarian manner (low involvement with high demands) (Baumrind, 1966, 2005). This practitioner’s behaviour was not unlike the Chinese practitioners’ fluctuation between ‘becoming playmates and being teachers’ identified in Tobin *et al.*, (2009, p.70).

### **Summary of Section 6.11**

The results of a study commissioned by the Scottish government (Dunlop *et al.*, 2008) highlighted the broad range of strategies employed by early years practitioners to support children’s positive behaviour; identifying 40 initial categories. As the authors propose, children’s behaviours are subject to interpretation. They also suggest the extent, to which behaviours are perceived to be problematic or not, is dependent on context. Whilst heeding these two observations, there were several salient differences that emerged between the Murcian and Kent practitioners’ behaviour management strategies and their promotion of valued behaviours. To illustrate some of these differences, I draw upon elements of Rosenthal’s (2003) framework for exploring collectivist and

individualist cultures in relation to valued educational practices attached in Appendix T. At both settings, consistent with the cultural scripts of individualism, behaviour norms were stated clearly and their rationale was explained. However, at the Kent settings practitioners' afforded further flexibility in adhering to these norms. In contrast, at the Murcian settings, particularly in highly-structured activities (see Figure 6.4, p.230), children were expected to conform to the *strictly* stated norms. In turn, if children did not conform to the rules or norms, their violation of these would be discussed at the group *asambleas* (assemblies). These different approaches indicated that the Kent settings were displaying elements of an individualistic cultural orientation (Rosenthal, 2003) whereas the Murcian settings' practices could be attributable to a more collectivist cultural script. Individualistic oriented relationships, based on 'mutual respect and equality' (Rosenthal, 2003) were typical of the Kent practitioners' behaviour towards children. Alternatively, the Murcian practitioners' relationship with children varied between one based on equality to a more hierarchical one; when practitioners became more authoritarian.

As I have also suggested, some examples of practitioners' behaviour management strategies could be linked to Baumrind (1966) and Macoby and Martin's (1983) classification of parenting/child-rearing styles. Baumrind (1966) identified three basic parenting styles (authoritarian; authoritative and permissive). Building on Baumrind's work, Macoby and Martin (1983) added a fourth style (neglectful) (see Table 6.16). These styles are based upon three dimensions:

- Responsiveness (warmth) - being involved and interested in child's activities, listening to the child and being supportive;

- Demandingness (strictness) - the amount of control imposed on a child, e.g. expectations for behaviour, the implementations of standards and rules, and the degree to which rules are enforced;
- Autonomy granting (allowing children autonomy and individual expression).

**Table 6.16: Child-rearing/parenting styles**

	<b>Warmth (responsiveness)</b>	<b>Demandingness</b>	<b>Autonomy granting</b>
<b>Authoritarian</b>	Low	High	Low
<b>Authoritative</b>	High	High	High
<b>Permissive to Indulgent</b>	High	Low	High
<b>Laissez faire to Neglectful</b>	Low	Low	Low

**Adapted from Baumrind (1996); Macoby and Martin (1983); Domenech Rodriguez *et al.* (2009)**

Whilst displaying child-rearing strategies related to all four styles, the Murcian practitioners were more likely to fluctuate between an authoritarian style and a laissez faire approach. In contrast, the Kent practitioners tended to favour an authoritative style (see Table 6.16). The practitioners' respective propensity towards these styles was not dissimilar to how unstructured and highly-structured activities (see Figure 6.4, p.230) were employed at the Murcian and Kent settings.

## **6.12 Discussion**

In Chapter 4 and at the beginning of this chapter, I introduced the concept of the “developmental niche”. This theoretical framework, used for studying the cultural structuring of children's environments (Harkness and Super, 1999), proved useful in exploring practitioners' dominant beliefs or ‘ethnotheories’ about children, childhood and child-rearing. In turn, drawing upon this framework enabled me to address two of my research questions:

- Are there any differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings in Murcia, Spain and Kent, England?
- Do identified patterns of interactions in these early years settings, and practitioners' beliefs and values about children reflect the social location of young children within the cultures investigated?

Practitioners' ethnotheories became evident in terms of the organisation of the setting's physical environments, and also in practitioners' culturally regulated customs and child-rearing practices. The respective curricular frameworks that the Murcian and Kent practitioners drew upon to inform their practices were both underpinned by a developmentally appropriate view of young children's learning, and educational values. However, the Murcian early years curriculum, being regionally based, afforded the practitioners more freedom in its implementation than the national EYFS curriculum used by the Kent practitioners.

The settings' physical environments varied in the amount of resources that were available to the children. Kent settings were more amply resourced; giving children opportunities to select from a wide range of equipment. In contrast, the more sparsely equipped Murcian environments offered children fewer resources to choose from. Tietze *et al.*, (1996) made similar observations in their comparative study of Germany, Portugal and Spain. The authors attributed Spain's low rating on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms and Clifford, 1980) to its traditionally more school-oriented approach, its limited facilities and equipment for play facilities. Nevertheless, fewer resources do not necessarily equate with inferior provision. As Prochner, Cleghorn and Green (2008) suggest, more materials may lead to more object play and less social play. Faced with fewer materials, children need to share, wait their turn and, negotiate



with peers (Freeman, 1998). At the Murcian settings, coupled with the lower adult-to-child ratio, fewer materials meant that, at times, the children experienced more freedom and autonomy. These occasions contrasted with the highly-structured activities (see Figure 6.4, p.230) that were indicative of a school-oriented approach (Tietze *et al.*, 1996). During these activities, children were expected to sit down for extended periods, and had little choice in deciding whether to partake or not.

Kent practitioners emphasised the importance of ‘free choice’, not only in choosing resources but also in allowing children to decide whether to participate in activities (Kwon, 2003). The Kent children were frequently presented with choices rather than being told what to do; a practice guided by child-initiated learning, defined as, ‘activities which children initiate and lead, selecting resources and some times involving others, and in which adults might join to help a child learn’ (Tickell, 2011a, p.52). Kent settings’ higher adult-to-child ratio resulted in children being under constant surveillance. Therefore, these children had few opportunities to play independently; away from the watchful eye of a practitioner.

Tobin *et al.*’s (2009) discussion of free choice, in their comparison of Japanese and US teachers’ practice, bore a striking resemblance to Murcian and Kent practitioners’ practice. Murcian practitioners placed more emphasis on children being free (when not involved in group activities) whereas the Kent practitioners put greater emphasis on choice (within a framework of defined options).

Super and Harkness (1986) suggest that obedience, responsibility, nurturing, achievement, self-reliance and general independence are child-rearing traits that are common to all societies. Nevertheless, the degree to which these traits are

emphasised will differ between societies. Practitioners' varied backgrounds were also likely to have influenced their child-rearing beliefs. These beliefs became apparent in how practitioners' viewed their roles; as carers or educators, or a combination of both. Practitioners' respective practices of providing contexts in which young children could develop the desired behaviours such as responsibility, obedience, independence, autonomy and relatedness influenced how the settings' environments were organised. This organisation defined the levels of freedom and control, and the relative emphases on group participation and individual oriented practices. By focusing on three key themes, I was able to reflect on the comparative importance that practitioners assigned to some of these traits. The analysis of these themes was also helpful in indicating how children were conceptualised by the practitioners.

Inspection regimes, physical environments and the ratio of adults to children underpinned the relative emphases that practitioners assigned to keeping children safe, providing opportunities for risk-taking and for developing resilience. The Kent settings seemed to be more constrained by external regulations, such as *Ofsted* inspections, which resulted in the practitioners grappling with a 'fear of being blamed' (Gill, 2007a). Powell's (2010) research in daycare settings in England revealed a similar theme in that practitioners' rarely felt unable to oppose 'rules' which they disagreed with. Therefore, although Kent practitioners held a wide variety of personal beliefs, these could be subsumed under 'a tight regime of accountability' (Müller *et al.*, 2009, p.5). Murcian practitioners displayed a more relaxed approach to external rules and being inspected; affording them more 'professional autonomy' (Müller *et al.*, 2009). Notwithstanding these differences, protecting children from harm was a priority for practitioners at all six settings.

The Kent practitioners' expressed a strong desire to protect children from the outside world, and to keep them safe and secure in their settings' 'little havens'. A key aim for these practitioners was to return children to their parents unscathed (Gill, 2007a). Keeping children physically safe became important when practitioners closely monitored children's play both indoors and outdoors. The example I presented of Shirley at Kent Setting 2 closely supervising children playing on a trampoline was reflective of these practices. Any injuries sustained by the Kent children; however minor were always attended to by a practitioner and recorded in an accident book. These heightened concerns about children's safety and injuries were comparable to Tobin *et al.*'s (2009), observations of similar incidents in the United States' preschools. Penn (1997) also identified a similar trait in her study of Italian, Spanish and UK nurseries in that the UK ones prioritised avoiding physical dangers, and eliminating risk and challenge.

Based upon observations and interviews with practitioners, the Murcian settings placed a high priority on developing children's resilience; partly in reaction to their view that parents' were overprotecting their children. Throughout the sessions, children negotiated tiled floors, broken toys, and experienced 'times of chaos' whilst practitioners' supervised their play from the sidelines. When children fell over, practitioners told them to get back up again and any minor accidents were dealt with in a matter-of-fact way. Overall, Murcian practitioners could be described as less risk averse than Kent practitioners. Again, these observations are resonant with the work of Penn (1997) who described Spanish nurseries as being 'almost cavalier about health and safety regulations' (p.115). Compatible with my own findings, Penn also noted that in the Spanish settings,

staff thought that children had to learn for themselves about hazards, and it was their task to help them learn and protect them whilst doing so.

Consequently, both Murcian and Kent practitioners' contrasting approaches to risk, safety and resilience were revealing about their values and beliefs about children's competences (Gill, 2007a). On one hand, practitioners viewed their roles as safeguarding children from their own shortcomings, on the other hand they thought children needed to face dangers and learn how to overcome them (Gill, 2007a).

In terms of nurturing behaviours, affective physical interactions were observed at all six settings on a daily basis. Both Murcian and Kent practitioners believed that these interactions were important to children's development (Owen and Gillentine, 2011). Some of the literature has highlighted the problematising of affective physical interactions between adults and children in Anglo-American care/education establishments (Piper and Stronach, 2008; Owen and Gillentine, 2011). Although maintaining the importance of touch, Kent practitioners were more likely to justify their touching behaviours than their Murcian counterparts. Nevertheless, this rationalization did not result in fewer affective physical interactions between Kent practitioners and children. There was no evidence to indicate that the Murcian practitioners' nurturing behaviours had been reconsidered as a result of the culture of fear (Piper, Powell and Smith, 2006) that has emerged about touching children. Practitioners, and other staff, at the three Murcian settings displayed affective physical interactions including touching behaviours unquestionably. Indeed the closeness of touching behaviours between practitioners and children, inherent in the Murcian grooming and preening incidents, was striking. However, during some highly-structured activities,

Murcian practitioners ensured that children stayed seated in their own spaces rather than sitting on practitioners' laps. During these times, Murcia practitioners maintained a physical distance from children, and became more 'educational' (Brougere *et al.*, 2008). On these occasions, practitioners expected children to sit and listen; with the aim of fostering children's independence. This practice was in contrast to the Kent settings where children regularly sat on practitioners' laps throughout the sessions. The Kent settings' lower child to practitioner ratio and their subsequent emphasis on dyadic interaction allowed the practitioners to be more motherlike (Tobin, *et al.*, 2009). This behaviour could also be linked to the Kent practitioners' efforts to create 'little havens' for the children. In brief, the Kent practitioners' acceptance that touch and nurturing was essential to young children's care and development took precedence over any notions that 'no touching' was good or safe child-care practice (Piper and Stronach, 2008).

How practitioners managed and regulated children's behaviour was related to the types of behaviour they prioritised, and how they conceptualised obedience. All six settings had rules, some written and some verbal that communicated the types of behaviours that practitioners wanted to encourage and discourage. Strategies for dealing with unwanted types of behaviours ranged from not interacting with children, talking to them about their problematic behaviour, and excluding children from the group. This latter strategy was frequently used in the Murcia settings. The Murcia practitioners demanded more obedient or conformist behaviour during highly-structured activities, as opposed to when the children were playing more freely. On these former occasions Murcia practitioners could be described as using an authoritarian method of behaviour management in contrast to a more *laissez faire* approach during unstructured

periods of activity (see Table 6.16). This non-interventionist approach was reminiscent of Tobin *et al.*'s (2009) observations of Japanese teachers balancing risk against the loss of valuable social experiences in similar situations. However, the Kent practitioners employed a more consistent method of behaviour management that was more compatible with an authoritative approach; regardless of whether the children were engaged in a focused learning activity (see Figure 6.4, p.230) or child-initiated activity.

Promoting manners, turn-taking and sharing were high on the agenda for Kent practitioners. When children displayed instances of these favoured behaviours they either received verbal praise from practitioners, or external rewards such as stickers. The Kent children were frequently praised for demonstrating socially desired behaviours such as 'not running around', 'sharing resources with their peers' and 'sitting nicely'. In contrast, 'sitting down' and 'listening' during highly-structured activities were behaviours that practitioners expected of Murcian children. Therefore, the children rarely received any acclaim from practitioners for doing so.

To return to my second question, I considered to what extent the practices and practitioners' beliefs and values about children and child-rearing reflected the social location of young children. This question can only be answered insofar as practitioners' goals and expectations concur with societal expectations for children's development and behaviour. At all settings, there was evidence to indicate that in the light of 'moral panics' children were viewed as both angels and devils reminiscent of Apollonian and Dionysian images (Cunningham, 1995; Stainton-Rogers, 2001; Jenks, 1996, 2005).

Practitioners linked some negative instances of children's behaviour to parental child-rearing strategies. To remedy some of these behaviours, practitioners felt it was their role to compensate for some of these strategies. Hence, the practitioners' placed different emphases on risk and safety factors, affective physical interactions and the management of children's behaviour. Consequently, the settings could be viewed as microcosms of care, education and socialisation that both mirrored and reacted to their wider societies. In this sense, my findings from Kent and Murcia concurred with Tobin, Wu and Davidson's (1989) study of Japan, China and the US that illustrated how features of early years settings are linked to cultural contexts and contemporary societal needs.

In summary, some of the differences in practitioners' practices and the resulting interactions with the children were revealing of their cultural assumptions and understandings about young children. From my own perspective, in my early visits to the Murcian settings, some of their cultural practices, when regarded through the lens of my own experience and culture resulted in somewhat negative interpretations (Harkness and Super, 1999). However, the extended time spent in the Murcian settings enabled me to reflect on how some of these disparities related to ideas and practice, could be the product of cultural differences as opposed to being problematic factors. This observation highlighted how some long-held beliefs and taken-for-granted customs of care may benefit from being questioned rather than being regarded as the right and natural mandated approach (Super and Harkness, 1999).

### **6.13 Summary**

In this chapter I focused upon the first two of my research questions and presented the data arising from the interviews with the 48 practitioners and my observations of child-adult interactions. I began by discussing the settings' physical environments, their curricular frameworks and the practitioners' profiles. After doing so, I looked at how the curricula and practitioners' training merged with their cultural practices to create the children's routines. Several differences were identified in the settings' physical environments, customs of care and practitioners' ethnotheories. These variations became visible in the number of resources, the level of structure and adult supervision, and the emphasis given to individual and group activities. I also focused on three themes that had the potential to be reflected in the wider society. In the next chapter, I move on to consider if any of the differences identified in the pre-compulsory settings were reflected in broader societal attitudes to young children.



## **Chapter 7: Findings and Discussion: Children's social location in the wider societies of Murcia and Kent**

### **7.0 Introduction**

This chapter builds upon my discussion from the preceding chapter, in which I presented the results and discussed the findings from research undertaken in the pre-compulsory early years settings. The intention is to extend my investigation to the wider societies of Murcia and Kent to look at the social location of children and to consider if any differences identified in the pre-compulsory settings are reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood?

This chapter is divided into two parts:

Part 1 explores some of the issues arising from interviews with 66 participants (comprising 48 practitioners and 18 parents). These interviews provided information pertinent to broader societal attitudes to children and childhood, and also regarding the place of children in both provided and non-provided spaces in Kent and Murcia. My discussion begins with an exploration of participants' views in relation to children's social location in intergenerational social spaces outside of the pre-compulsory settings.

In this first part of the chapter both practitioners and parents will be referred to as participants. However, where a specific interview extract is cited the name of the practitioner or number of parent is identified. In reporting on the findings the following terms have been used to describe the proportions of participants' responses in Part 1:

Majority = around 80%

Many = around 65%

Some = around 50%

Few = around 20%

In Part 2 I present the findings resulting from interviews with 18 representatives from a sample of intergenerational spaces; restaurants, hotels and shopping centres in Murcia and Kent; and also from the observations undertaken in these spaces. The intention was to build up a picture of children's social location in the two respective societies of Murcia and Kent.

Several differences, in the interactions, relationships and practices prioritised by practitioners in the Kent and Murcian pre-compulsory settings were identified in the previous Chapter 6. Three particular themes were highlighted as they had the potential to be observed in the wider societies and to give some indication of the social location of young children within the two cultures. These themes comprised: risk, safety and resilience; affective physical interactions and behaviour management: the promotion of social norms. Throughout the discussion, I consider to what extent aspects of these themes were reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood.

## **Part 1**

### **7.1 Early years settings as part of the local community**

All the settings, in the very nature that they provided specific spaces designed for young children, played some part in separating them from the everyday lives and cultures of adults in their communities (Moss and Petrie, 2002; Nimmo, 2008). Regardless of this division, many practitioners at the six pre-compulsory early

years settings emphasised their roles and responsibilities as members of their local communities. Their recognition of these roles is exemplified in these examples from Settings 3 and 5:

I think we are very much in the centre of what is happening here...we are part of looking after the community...

(Kent Setting 3, Interview Louise, 06.12.07)

Felicia, the manager, is very eager to show me the framed embroidery that is displayed on the wall that was presented to them to acknowledge the setting's place in the *Barrio* (district) where the setting is located.

(Murcia Setting 5, Extract from Research Diary, 22.04.08;  
Photograph of embroidery detailing the award)

Therefore, it was not surprising that the majority of the 48 practitioners said they were well-informed about the wider societies in which their settings were located. This local knowledge proved useful for providing a link between the two parts of my research; the pre-compulsory settings and the social spaces in the wider societies of Murcia and Kent. Thirteen of the 25 Murcian practitioners and 17 of the 23 Kent practitioners had their own children and some were also grandparents. Consequently, these practitioners were well-placed to share their experiences of spending time with young children in the wider societies of Murcia and Kent. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that their direct engagement in the care of children in a [paid] primary role (Nimmo, 2008) may potentially have impacted on their responses. Therefore, I also interviewed 18 parents/carers [six from Kent, six from Murcia and six British expatriates living in Murcia]; none of who worked as early years practitioners. Their responses were analysed alongside those of the

practitioners. I now consider the 66 participants' views of the provision made for children within Murcian and Kentish intergenerational spaces.

## **7.2 Children's place in intergenerational social spaces**

### **Children's reception into shared social spaces**

The majority of Murcian participants thought that children were welcomed into most public spaces unless there was a valid reason for excluding them. Thus, if a bar had chosen to allow smoking, children were not permitted for their own protection. Consequently, in Murcia, *La ley antitabaco* (the anti-tobacco law) had forced public spaces such as bars, restaurants and hotels to review their policies about admitting children (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of this issue). As expressed by this Murcian parent, children's presence could be subject to restrictions; both on legal grounds and also in relation to their behaviour:

Children are welcome in most public places but they are expected to be well-behaved. However, there are certain places where they are not allowed, for example some *cafeterias* are just for over 18 year olds and they cannot go in places where they permit smoking...there are not many separate places for children and they are certainly welcome in all hotels...but there are times when children are expected to be quiet, for example, when we go camping in summer we have rules about this at siesta time – but this applies to adults also...

(Interview, Murcia Parent 1, 24.04.08)

Equally, the majority of Murcian participants were unaware of any public spaces in Murcia; such as restaurants and hotels that declared themselves as being especially suitable for children in Murcia. Although acknowledging a gradual

improvement in facilities for children and families in Murcia, some of these participants discussed the limited availability of spaces for families and children. In doing so, they bemoaned the absence of specific facilities for children such as activities in hotels, highchairs in restaurants and crèches in supermarkets.

Drawing upon his experience of visiting Sweden a Murcian parent recalled the availability of children's menus which he explained were more of a rarity in Murcia:

...When I visited Sweden...they had children's portions in restaurants but they were not as welcoming as Murcia is to children. *Menus infantiles* (children's menus) would be a good idea here but only if they were smaller versions of what the adults were eating – not fast food. As a lot of food in Spain is put in the middle of the table [in restaurants] we normally ask for a smaller plate for the children and put the children some food on this – this is good for *paellas*, *ensaladas* and *frituras*.

(Interview, Murcia Parent 2, 28.04.08)

Although suggesting that certain children's menus could be a positive addition to the existing Murcian dining-out experience, this participant implies that welcoming children into social spaces extends beyond providing special facilities for them.

When asked about children's reception into Kentish shared social spaces the majority of the Kent participants, said this could vary between places, and often be unpredictable. This view is represented in the following response:

...attitudes vary so much in England. Go to some family orientated places such as Center Parcs and you will see children spending time with their families and being welcome to use all the facilities

but this is not the status quo. Sometimes it is in the most unlikely places such as an upmarket restaurant where children are really made to feel welcome.

(Interview, Kent Parent 1, 03.09.08)

Many of the Kent participants gave examples of provided *child-friendly* spaces such as restaurants with *ballpools* and play areas in pubs. However, these spaces were not always regarded favourably by some of these participants who had children:

...in some pubs...there's a danky old room with a toy box in the corner...

(Setting 1, Interview Carol, 02.10.07)

The provision of specific *child-friendly* facilities was also equated with segregating children from the rest of society by some Kent participants; especially when families were confined to these areas in restaurants.

Various establishments in Kent, such as restaurants and pubs, had specific times when, and special sections where, they admitted children. Some of the Kent participants had mixed feelings about the practicalities of these measures, emphasising how confusing these ever-changing rules could be (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Rowena, 21.11.07; Kent Setting 3, Interview, Esther, 12.12.07). As can be seen from the following list of rules in Figure 7.1, obtained from a Kent restaurant/pub cited by several Kent practitioners, this confusion was not surprising:

#### **WELCOMING FAMILIES IN OUR PUBS/RESTAURANTS**

- We welcome accompanied children and young people (under 18 years old) in our pub/restaurant, until 19.00.
- If adults wish to consume alcohol, please order a meal for everyone in the group – up until 18.00 (babies/toddlers excepted). You are welcome to stay for one additional alcoholic drink, after finishing your meal.
- Adults and accompanied children may consume non-alcoholic drinks, with or without food, up until 6pm.
- For their own safety, children and young people must be supervised by an adult (over 18 years old) at all times and be seated at a table. They are not permitted at the bar.
- Children and young people are not permitted to play on any games machines.
- Children and young people are not permitted to purchase or consume alcohol.
- The above guidelines are for the safety and comfort of all families visiting our pubs.
- Please be advised that these guidelines may be varied at any time (without notice) at the discretion of the duty manager.
- The timings, as detailed above, are also subject to change (without notice) on certain days.

**THANK YOU - AND WE HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR VISIT**

**Fig. 7.1: List of rules in Kent Restaurant/Pub**

However, as reflected in the following response, some Kent participants suggested that families should draw upon their own common sense, rather than being constrained by rules, to reflect on whether it was a suitable time for children to be taken out:

Families should have the opportunity to go out and socialise – obviously there's a fine line to it...bringing your children into a pub at half nine ten o'clock and you're being silly...

(Kent Setting 3, Interview, Naomi, 05.12.07)

Nevertheless, as demonstrated in Part 2, data from my interviews and observations highlighted differences in the Murcian and Kentish daily timetables within public places. Therefore, children were more likely to be seen in some spaces such as

restaurants alongside adults, at a more advanced hour in Murcia rather than in Kent.

### **Separate areas for children within intergenerational spaces**

Participants were asked about the practice of providing separate areas for children such as crèches in shopping centres and hotels, or special sections in restaurants (or in some cases not admitting them at all). Over half of all the Kent and Murcian participants were in favour of separate areas for children in shopping centres. Many of these Murcian participants emphasised the advantages of separate areas where children could be entertained whilst parents were shopping but were adamant that hotels and restaurants should not exclude children:

All shopping centres should have a separate play area equipped especially for children. They did not used to have them but now many have introduced them and they have educators who can mind the child...tell stories and sing songs... whilst the mother does the shopping or undertakes some other task...However, hotels and restaurants should not have a policy to not admit children...

(Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Mariana, 22.01.08)

Some Kent participants seemed to be unsure whether there should be separate areas for children or not (Kent Setting 2, Interviews, Shirley, 08.11.07 and Rowena, 21.11.07; Kent Setting 3, Interview, Sarah, 11.12.07). However, many Kent participants felt quite strongly that children should not be confined to separate areas for a variety of reasons, ‘...children are our future...’ (Kent Setting 1, Interview, Jackie, 10.10.07), ‘...separate rooms [for children] are usually inferior’ (Interview, Kent Parent 1, 03.09.08), ‘...they alienate children from the



rest of the society' (Interview, Kent Parent 2, 05.09.08) and also prevent children from learning how to behave in social areas (Interview, Kent Parent 3, 06.09.08).

All the Murcian participants emphasised how important the availability of intergenerational spaces was to them. The majority of these participants explained how different generations liked to eat together (Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Mariana, 22.01.08) and emphasised that, '...separate areas should not interfere with the importance of the family because [in Murcia] we like to mix the ages and socialise together...' (Interview, Murcian Parent 1, 24.04.08). As illustrated in the following comment, it was significant that some Murcian participants implied that not allowing children into some public spaces could be seen as a form of discrimination or even an infringement upon children's rights:

Not admitting children [in public spaces] in our country is a form of discrimination according to law.  
(Murcia Setting 6, Interview, Alma, 16.05.08)

I now refer to examples from the interviews to look at some of the arguments given by participants that were supportive of initiatives to separate children and adults.

### **The rationale for separating children and adults**

Some Kent participants (and one participant from Murcia) thought it was the prerogative of establishments such as hotels and restaurants to choose not to admit children or thought that there should be a choice of areas. Nevertheless, ultimately this meant segregating children from some places so that certain groups of adults could have their own child-free areas. Particular groups referred to by participants included older people (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Bella, 07.11.07;

Kent Setting 1, Interview, Jen, 03.10.07)), those without children (Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Estafania, 21.05.08; Interview, Kent Parent 3, 06.09.08) and parents who wanted a break from their own children (Kent Setting 1, Interview, Margaret, 02.10.07; Kent Setting 3, Interview Alma, 11.12.07) Some participants, although emphasising the existence of a democratic society and the choice that this supported, still thought that this was no reason for having a policy not to admit children:

...in a free society, hotels and restaurants should be able to do what they want, within reason, [but] not allowing children sends out the message that they are in some way pariahs or “unwantables”. There can rarely, if ever, be a valid or genuine reason for not admitting children. Many adults behave far worse than children – is there a policy for not admitting these as well?

(Interview, Kent Parent 2, 05.09.08)

Additionally, to emphasise how important spending time in intergenerational groups was to third age Murcianos, Lola emphasised how restaurants realised that not admitting children could be detrimental to business:

Restaurants, in particular, are reluctant to refuse children as they would lose their clientele of older people and also cut out potential customers if they did not allow children and grandchildren...they would just go to a place that liked children...

(Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Lola, 22.01.08)

However, this expatriate parent, living in Murcia, thought there should be separate areas for children, and that it was appropriate for some hotels and restaurants to have a no-children policy. This was to protect herself from the wrath of people who did not want to be with children:

[I think there should be separate areas]...but this is only because I feel tense if I think that my children are bothering other people and I can't relax if I see people around me looking annoyed if they are making too much noise...it would be appropriate for some hotels and restaurants to have a policy not to admit children...because I would rather that people who didn't want children around had the option of [going to] such places.

(Interview, Expatriate Parent 1, 13.01.09)

Similarly, another parent suggested that occasionally there may be an argument for separate areas for children with the proviso that '...people not wishing to stop around children should not moan if they choose to stay or eat in family friendly facilities' (Interview, Kent Parent 3, 06.09.08).

A prominent theme, underpinned some of the Murcian participants' responses. These participants said that separate areas for children may be acceptable if these were for the benefit of the children (Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Marcela, 15.05.08; Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Paula, 28.04.08). The same Murcian participants said this practice was dependent on provided spaces being suitably equipped (Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Patricia, 09.05.08) and also if parents and children could choose whether to use these spaces or not (Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Mara, 29.04.08). Miranda's response represented a view expressed by the majority of these Murcian participants when she emphasised the following point:

If the separation is for the benefit of the child – yes – if it is to separate them for adults' convenience – no.

(Murcia Setting 6, Interview, Miranda, 12.05.08)

Consequently, based on my sample of 66 participants a noticeable difference between Murcian and Kentish responses was their respective attitudes to the perceived intention of separation initiatives, and who were the main beneficiaries; adults or children.

### **Some places are not suitable for children**

It was suggested by some Kent participants that certain places, even though not having a policy for not admitting children, may just not be suitable for children. Therefore adults may choose not to take children along to these places. Examples of unsuitable places suggested by these participants were, ‘...restaurants with meals which the children wouldn’t eat or too expensive...’, (Kent Setting 1, Interview, Heather, 17.10.07) ‘...places such as hotels; lacking child-oriented facilities (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Rowena, 21.11.07), pubs where alcoholic drinks were served (Kent Setting 3, Interview, Fran, 12.12.07) and places where children would find it difficult to adapt their behaviour (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Harriet, 08.11.07).

This latter point was echoed by some Murcian participants, as exemplified in the following responses: ‘...there are places that are not fitted out for children and...it is acknowledged that children may disturb [others] without there being optimal or suitable conditions...’ (Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Estafania, 21.05.08) and ‘...in shops with things that break you will rarely see children...and in painting exhibitions they would not like you to be there with children...’ (Murcia Setting 6, Interview, Azura, 20.05.08).

Nevertheless, the following Kent participant drew on her recent experience of booking a hotel in England to demonstrate her frustration about how some places used their lack of suitable facilities for children as an excuse to exclude them:

I have a four-year-old and we are going back to the hotel we went to before because none of the other hotels accepted under-fives. They couldn't give any good reasons to say why they didn't. I said 'Why don't you take under-fives?' ...but it's their policy. The main excuses they gave were that they did not have any suitable facilities for young children – food or otherwise. But my child does not need special facilities – she eats the same food as the rest of the family.

(Kent Setting 1, Interview, Judy, 04.10.07)

#### **Perceived benefits of integrating children with adults**

Despite initiatives, both explicit and implicit, that worked to separate children and adults, many participants from Murcia and Kent suggested that both children and adults (of all ages), alongside authors such as Tonucci (2003, 2004), may benefit from, or enjoy the experience of spending time together:

...the moments of recreation should be shared. Parents and children ought to share the free-time together.

(Murcia Setting 6, Interview, Alma, 16.05.08)

We went to a hotel where there was a bowls party at a hotel last year...the majority of the people were older and they loved having my daughter (who was three then) around them. They were dancing with her and they had absolutely no problem with having a child around at all. I think it's important to mix ages...Taking children to restaurants and other public places, where there is a mix of ages, helps [children] to learn firsthand how to behave appropriately in these situations.

(Kent Setting 1, Interview, Judy, 04.10.07)

Many Kent and Murcian participants held the view that integrating children into public spaces and involving them in everyday activities such as shopping and eating out could help them to develop social skills. This view is emphasised in the latter part of the previous interview extract and also in the following examples. Some of these participants also suggested that not integrating children into society from an early age may have repercussions for their future roles as adults:

...if you take children into a restaurant from a very young age...they are going to learn how to behave in restaurants...otherwise you are going to put them out into society in their teenage years when they start going out with friends and they are not going to know how to act – they are not going to know how to order stuff from a menu...they are going to get...to teenage years and...that's where trouble starts – if they don't know how to socialise and they don't know how to act around other people...you start getting teenagers that...carry knives and things...

(Kent Setting 3, Interview, Esther, 12.12.07)

I believe that everyone has to learn to live with each other and to respect each other – to mix ages together helps this...

(Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Mara, 29.04.08)

Whilst many participants from both Murcia and Kent agreed that mixing with adults may have a positive effect on children's behaviour some Kent participants suggested that the provision of designated children and family areas may have a negative impact on children's behaviour:

Children need to learn to behave themselves in normal adult company and this does not happen by having separate areas for families in public places. It also gives the wrong impression that children can somehow act differently in these “special” areas and that often happens in family-only parts of restaurants where it seems that children are given *carte blanche* to do what they like, for example to be extremely noisy, run around as much as they like, etc.

(Interview, Kent Parent 2, 05.09.08)

I am reluctant to take my own children to [child-friendly] places because I find that they are sometimes used by families who let their children ‘run wild’. I don’t want to eat or shop where children are running around unchecked and I don’t want my own children copying that behaviour.

(Interview, Kent Parent 1, 03.09.08)

Therefore, whilst intergenerational restaurants were regarded as being valuable sites for children’s positive socialization, the opposite view seemed to be equated with some *child-only* segregated areas. These spaces were deemed, by some participants, to have a detrimental influence on children’s behaviour. Ironically, children’s negative behaviour was a reason why many participants thought that children may not be welcomed into some public spaces. Consequently, the issue of social norms and sanctions emerged as a key theme as to why children may not be accepted in social situations.

### **Children’s behaviour as a barrier to integrating children and adults**

Pertinent to the issue of children’s behaviour, many Murcian and Kent participants thought that children may not be accepted into some public places if this

behaviour did not conform to the expectations equated with a certain type of setting. As emphasised by this participant, 'The children are always well received as long as their behaviour is suitable with respect to that particular establishment' (Murcia Setting 6, Interview, Alma, 16.05.08).

Children's failure to meet behaviour standards was frequently linked to boredom: '...A bored child is a disruptive child – no matter where they are...at a setting, in a home, or in a restaurant' (Kent Setting 1, Interview, Carol, 02.10.07). Parents' inability to employ suitable strategies to encourage children's socially acceptable behaviours, for example, 'sitting down', 'good manners' (Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Amalia, 30.01.08) or to discourage negative behaviours, such as 'screaming' (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Lynn, 22.11.07), 'talking loudly' (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Rowena, 21.11.07) and 'being naughty' (Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Ava, 05.02.08) were also cited. Therefore, the majority of participants ultimately thought that particular child-rearing skills and techniques underpinned whether children behaved appropriately or not. However, some Kent participants also emphasised that there was a tendency to judge children as a group who behaved badly. As expressed by this Kent participant, this resulted in all children being 'tarred with the same brush':

...most shops accept children...it's just that if children are pulling the clothes off the rails – like some of em do – they're gonna all get tarred with the same brush sort of thing – and they're gonna complain aren't they? I mean – its down to the behaviour again...I've been into shops where you try to look round and there's children lifting things up and pulling things down and... their mothers don't take no notice...which is very wrong...but that's how some people are...

(Kent Setting 3, Interview, Glenda, 11.12.07)



One parent lamented the fact that some hotels and restaurants had to resort to not admitting children but returned to the importance of children behaving appropriately in these spaces:

I think it is rather sad that [some hotels and restaurants] feel they have to [have policies not to admit children] and I would never use them. Personally I like seeing children around, even if I am out without my own, but the key is that if [children] are in an adult environment they should be expected to behave appropriately. If they don't then it's due to the adults they are with and they should be asked to leave. I think knowing how to behave in a hotel or restaurant is an important part of growing up. As a family we should be able to go out and have a good time together without disturbing others.

(Interview, Kent Parent 1, 03.09.08)

Thus, some parents referred to other people's children behaviour as being problematic implying that their own children did behave appropriately. In turn, some Kent participants thought that parents needed to take responsibility for their children's behaviour. Some Kent participants shared strategies that they had employed to keep their children occupied and to prevent them from annoying other people. These examples included bringing along toys to play with (Setting 1, Interview, Carol, 02.10.07) or getting children to help with the shopping (Setting 1, Interview, Heather, 17.10.07). Regardless of these efforts, it seemed that other adults reacted to children's presence in a variety of ways.

### **Adults' reactions towards children's behaviour**

A salient theme discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis was in relation to the mass media's portrayal of adults' attitudes to children in Spain and England. This theme culminated in a somewhat idealistic picture of Spanish adults' behaviour towards children in contrast to a less than positive one in relation to English adults. I now return to this theme in the context of my interviews with Murcian and Kent participants.

When asked about how people reacted to a child crying in a restaurant this expatriate parent summarised the differences that she associated between adults in Spain and in England:

In Spain, people intervene kindly and are caring and try to help to pacify the child. Crying children are never an annoyance to Spanish people but I have found in England in supermarkets that people look over and stare without saying anything and that makes you feel uncomfortable.

(Interview, Expatriate Parent 1, 13.01.09)

Resonant with this view, many of the Kent participants gave examples when they had been in situations when adults had demonstrated an intolerance of children's presence or behaviour, often expressing this annoyance by 'tutting' or 'staring':

I hate it when I am on a bus or somewhere and I can hear people tutting because a child is making a noise – [or just] talking – it is normal and I hate [it] – I just ignore them.

(Kent Setting 1, Interview, Jackie, 10.10.07)

[Other people]...usually stare at the parents...I've had it – I know what they are going through...

(Kent Setting 3, Interview, Mel, 11.12.07)

Some of these Kent participants gave examples of comments that had been made by other adults criticising children's behaviour. For example, Louise from Kent Setting 3, (Interview 06.12.07) thought that there was a view in Kent that 'Children should be seen and not heard' noting that '...older ladies usually say she needs a good slap'. Other negative comments that Kent participants had encountered included, 'Oh – she should be in bed' (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Sam, 06.11.07) and 'Control your child' (Kent Setting 2, Interview, Rowena, 21.11.07).

Consequently, some Kent participants proposed that there were certain groups of people that were more likely to be intolerant; the older generation and the child-free:

If a child starts to cry in a public place people react negatively...especially the older generation. If no children of [their] own they think I wish I could do my shopping in peace – they think mothers should control them.

(Kent Setting 1, Interview, Heather, 17.10.07)

Nevertheless, some Kent participants suggested that adults who were used to being around children tended to be more sympathetic if a child was crying:

...the section of the population that are used to children just say 'Poor mum' and are very tolerant but I know there are people who are not so tolerant.

(Kent Setting 2, Interview, Harriet, 08.11.07)

However, some Kent and Murcian participants suggested that adults' intolerance may also be a negative response towards the parents' child-rearing strategies:

...I ...think that we have a culture of blame in this country and a view that parents aren't doing their job. And they think if a child can't behave – it's the parents' fault...

(Kent Setting 2, Interview, Sam, 06.11.07)

The people see it normal that a child will cry. However, I don't know if people are as tolerant of the strategies used by the parents to deal with the child's behaviour...sometimes they have their own theories...

(Murcia Setting 6, Interview, Miranda, 12.05.08)

Nevertheless, rather than being based on intolerance, a key reason given by many Murcian participants of how adults reacted to a child crying in a public place was because they were curious. This curiosity could result in people standing and watching (Murcia Setting 4, Interviews, Laura, 31.01.08; Ava, 05.02.08) or showing an interest in why the child was crying (Murcia Setting 4, Alexia, 06.02.08). Rubi expresses this reaction in the following example:

People look and think why is he crying? Their reaction depends on what they know about the situation. For example, is he teething? Is he hungry or has something else happened?

(Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Rubi, 22.01.08)

Consequently, according to some Murcian participants, a child who was crying for a valid reason i.e. teething could be looked on more sympathetically by adults than a child who was 'misbehaving'. Additionally, this participant thought that

parents acted differently towards their children in public places because they felt they were being judged about their parenting skills by onlookers and would be more likely to give into them, ‘...because they feel ashamed in front of the other people...’ (Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Mariana, 22.01.08). Despite people looking, Mariana’s colleague Nadia thought that parents should not give into children’s tantrums even if they felt embarrassed (Murcia Setting 4, Interview, Nadia, 05.02.08). Nevertheless, compatible with the view of Expatriate Parent 1 cited on p.289, the majority of Murcian participants thought that some people may offer advice or help out:

Generally other people look and often give some advice to the parent...

(Murcia Setting 5, Interview, Paula, 28.04.08)

Thus, parents and carers in both societies could be judged on their parenting skills. However, based upon the responses of many Kent and Murcian participants it was evident that Murcian adults would be more likely to intervene (than Kent adults) when a child was crying in a public space. Sam drew upon her past experience of living in Italy to explain why she thinks this happens:

...I think we think too much about it [if a child becomes difficult] rather than using our instincts – in Italy its more about going in there and using their instincts – so nobody thinks twice about chastising a child even if its not their child but [in England] everyone is so scared about anyone interfering with their children – it’s a culture of terror that we wrap around them. Protecting our children...is obviously right, but mistrusting everybody too. I think we are too afraid of upsetting other people and also I don’t think people would take [their children being told off] so easily.

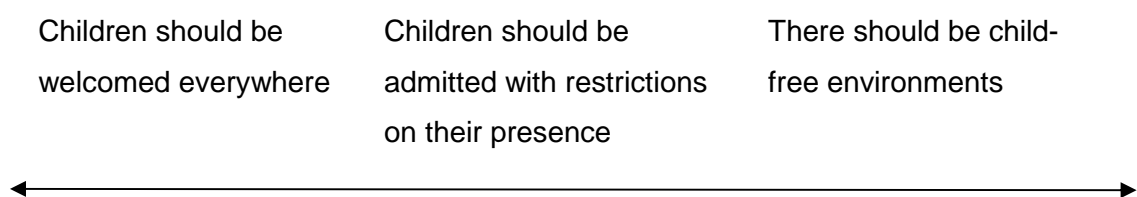
(Kent Setting 2, Interview, Sam, 06.11.07)

Harriet (Kent Setting 2, Interview 08.11.07) also proposed that in England some adults may be reluctant to approach other people's children. Equally, Kent participants thought parents may be sceptical if other adults approach their children, either because of fear factors or because they think their parenting skills are being criticised. Therefore, based on participants' responses a prevalent view emerged that adults in Murcia may react less negatively to children's behaviour in comparison to some adults in Kent.

### 7.3 Discussion of Findings from Part 1

## The acceptance of children into social situations

The majority of Murcian participants thought that children were accepted in social situations unless there was a valid reason given for excluding them. In contrast, the majority of Kent participants thought that children's acceptance into social situations could be more ambiguous. Hence, based upon data collected for this part of the study, with the exception of legal rulings, adults' attitudes to children in public places were predominantly based upon arbitrary decisions as to whether children's presence was embraced or not. Consequently, these attitudes could be placed on a continuum between two opposing positions: 'Children should be welcomed everywhere' and 'There should be child-free environments' (see Figure 7.2).



**Figure 7.2: Continuum of attitudes to children's presence in public spaces**

Despite the recent emergence of some child-free areas in Spain (see Chapter 2), all the Murcian participants emphasised how important spending time in intergenerational spaces was to them. Their views were consistent with studies that have researched the public use of Spanish intergenerational spaces such as parks and playgrounds (Baylina Ferré, Ortiz Guitart, and Prats Ferret, 2006; Cucurella, Garcia-Ramon, Baylina, 2006). Reflecting on their findings, Baylina Ferré *et al.* suggested that a desire to occupy the streets is particularly relevant to the inhabitants of Mediterranean cities. However, as highlighted in Chapter 4, Furedi (2002, 2008a, 2008b) has argued in several publications that British adults have become estranged from the world of children.

#### **Restrictions on children's presence**

As can be gleaned from the review of mass media sources in Chapter 2 a range of adults' standpoints had resulted in time and space restrictions on children's admittance into public spaces; especially in the UK. In Chapter 3 I drew attention to some UK and Spanish legal frameworks that enforced external restrictions on children's presence in some public spaces. Some Murcian participants referred to examples of Spanish legal frameworks to highlight how children's location in the wider society could be constrained by these rulings. However, a list of rules compiled by a Kent restaurant/pub (see Figure 7.1, p.278) demonstrated that children's presence was not solely controlled by legal restrictions. Some rules had been constructed in response to children's negative behaviour, and to prevent this behaviour from disturbing or annoying adults. Regardless of external restrictions, such as laws and individual policies created by establishments, both Murcian and Kent participants gave examples of certain adult-centred spaces that they

considered unsuitable for children. Arguments for restricting children's presence in these spaces were either to protect the children from inappropriate surroundings, or to protect adults from children's disturbances.

### **Facilities for children**

My review of mass media sources in Chapter 2 indicated that the UK provided more specific facilities than Spain for children in public spaces; especially in restaurants. These findings were compatible with the responses of Kent and Murcian participants in their discussion of the availability of child-focused provision. As reported by participants, *child-friendly* amenities in commercial establishments comprised resources such as highchairs, babychanging facilities and children's menus. Additionally, some establishments such as restaurants and shopping centres had created separate areas i.e. *ballpools* for children to be able to spend time free from adults (or vice versa). Kent participants did not always regard this provision favourably. Indeed, some Kent participants felt that some establishments such as hotels may use their lack of facilities as an excuse to exclude children. In contrast to Kent participants, Murcian participants reported that Murcia had few child-centred facilities, resulting in some of them bemoaning the absence of these provisions.

All participants had mixed feelings about whether separate spaces for children were a good idea or not. These views were largely dependent on the intention of the separation in relation to whether this was for the benefit of the children, or alternatively for the benefit of the adults. Commercial provision such as play centres attached to pubs and shops have been defined as commodities which are traded between providers and parents (Moss and Petrie, 2002, p.109). Other



authors have defined the function of this provision to address the needs of parents (Blackford, 2004; McKendrick, Bradford and Fielder, 2000) and where children may lose control over their play (McKendrick *et al.*, 2000). Nevertheless, the Murcian participants were more likely to think that their fewer child-focused initiatives were designed for the benefit of children. In contrast, some Kent participants felt that some of the UK's child-focused separation initiatives were to protect *other* adults from children's actual or perceived nuisance status.

Consequently, adults' control of public space was underpinned by their responses to the perceived and real threats posed to them from children. Adults' perception of children's behaviour led them to categorise children as either angels or devils (Jenks, 1996, 2005; Valentine, 1996a, 1996b). When children were viewed as *Apollonian angels* in need of protection, this resulted in the enforcement of restrictions on their presence in public spaces to keep children safe. On the other hand, understanding children as naughty, unruly and unsocialised *Dionysian devils* (Holloway and Valentine, 2000a) impacted on their exclusion from public spaces. These conceptualisations could deter some adults from wanting to spend time alongside children, and distance children from those adults who may avoid being with children.

With this in mind, some Kent participants felt that on occasions, children and families were obliged to use child-friendly areas or patronise establishments that had decided to explicitly welcome them. Thus, some restaurants could be seen as losing their identity as eating places by becoming too child-friendly when they began to provide facilities such as colouring activities and play areas for children. Equally, for those parents that wanted to sit down and socialise with their children whilst eating, these *reinvented restaurants* were viewed as barriers to doing so. As

noted in Chapter 2, p. 47 some UK restaurants were trying to discard their child-friendly image as this was deterring some clients from patronising these establishments.

The provision of child-focused amenities was partly indicative of children being regarded as a distinct group from adults compatible with a social-structural or generational view of childhood (Mayall and Zeiher, 2003). Providing child-only spaces could afford children and adults with opportunities to spend time apart from each other. Participants thought that these initiatives impacted on children differently. For example, separate spaces gave children opportunities to be free from the watchful eye of familiar adults; thus promoting their independence. On the other hand, if children were predominantly with adults, because of a lack of child-centred spaces, this could have the opposite effect of inhibiting children's autonomy by making them dependent on adults.

The lower availability of child-focused initiatives seemed to be a contributory factor for bringing Murcian children and adults together. Additionally, many participants suggested that situating children alongside adults was an opportunity to reinforce social norms such as learning how and when to sit down. As suggested by De Visscher and Bouverne-De Bie (2008a) children need to be 'educated' in order to integrate them into adult life.

### **Children's behaviour**

A particular barrier, to children's integration into intergenerational spaces, mentioned frequently by both Murcian and Kent participants, was the type of behaviour associated with children. Both Murcian and Kent participants' responses were couched in notions of valued social norms and whether or not

young children's behaviour conformed to the expectations of particular establishments. Some Kent participants suggested that situating children in specifically child-focused spaces could have a detrimental effect on their behaviour. Nevertheless, some participants implied that their own children's behaviour conformed to social norms but other children's behaviour may not. Behaviour that failed to meet social norms was attributed to ineffective child-rearing skills or a negation of parental responsibilities. Studies exploring behaviour in UK-based early childhood environments have indicated that adults have notions of what a "proper" child should be; defined by acting appropriately and being recognised as having done so (Maclure, *et al.*, 2009). As highlighted in the findings in Chapter 6, behaviour management strategies and the promotion of social norms in the six pre-compulsory settings could also be arbitrary, and open to different interpretations. Therefore, it is likely that broader societal attitudes to children also reflect a wide range of views about what factors defined an obedient or a disobedient child.

#### **Adults' tolerance of children's behaviour**

Kent participants highlighted the intolerance of some adults as being a barrier to the acceptance of young children in social situations. Many of these participants proposed that childlike behaviour was a key reason for (other) adults not wanting to be with children. They suggested that some adults may avoid being with children because children's behaviour *per se* was viewed negatively. As emphasised by De Visscher and Bouverne-De Bie (2005, 2008a) children may be easily seen as nuisances in public spaces. This view was congruent with elements of my discussion of this issue in Chapter 2. Several sources indicated that

children's behaviour was not always viewed as 'bad behaviour' but could be annoying or irritating to adults. Some socially constructed traits assigned to children were that they were loud, shouted, cried, ran around, and could not sit still. These reactions highlighted the duality of innocence and threat inherent in the public discourse about children. Once these images had been constructed they then tended to be applied to all children (sometimes even before a child had displayed any of these behaviours). As suggested by Glenda at Kent Setting 3, '...children could be tarred with the same brush' (see p. 287).

Many Kent participants recalled occasions when other adults had reacted negatively to children's presence. Typical reactions included 'tutting', 'staring' and making disapproving comments (without intervening directly with the parents or the child). Some Kent participants proposed that there were certain groups of people that were more likely to be intolerant. However, Murcian and Kent participants thought that natural traits such as a baby crying loudly tended to be treated more sympathetically than a child who was seen as 'misbehaving' and not reprimanded by parents/carers. Interestingly, it became evident that Murcian adults would be more likely to intervene (than Kent adults) when a child was crying in a public space; this could be to offer help or to reprimand the parents or the child. These reactions indicated that some aspects of intergenerational relations in Murcia could be less problematic than they were in Kent. Having looked at participants' attitudes towards young children, in Part 2 I discuss the visits made to a sample of intergenerational spaces.

## **Part 2**

### **7.4 Public spaces: Hotels, restaurants and shopping centres**

For the second part of the fieldwork a sample of physical environments, comprising hotels, restaurants and shopping centres, in the wider societies of Murcia and Kent, were visited. This endeavour was to investigate if there was any variance between participants' espoused views of the attitudes to young children, and the facilities available to them. During these visits, interviews were conducted with key participants who negotiate the place of children in these public places. Observations were also undertaken focusing on child and adult interactions in some of these spaces. In this section I begin by reporting on my visits and interviews conducted in the hotels, and then move on to do the same for the restaurants and shopping centres.

As I demonstrate, the findings from this part of the study demonstrated few differences in the provision made for children in shopping centres in Murcia and Kent. However, in hotels and restaurants the Kent personnel had analysed children's presence in more depth than those employed in Murcia. Overall, this resulted in less specialist provision created for children in these two types of establishment in Kent.

## **7.5 The Hotels**

The six hotels I visited in Kent and Murcia, alongside their self-reported facilities for children, are detailed in Table 7.1. As can be seen in this table, three hotels in each of Kent and Murcia, that admitted children, were visited and a representative from each of the hotels interviewed. As with the pre-compulsory early years settings, I visited two coastal hotels, two hotels situated in the town or city, and two that were situated on the outskirts of these towns/cities.

**Table 7.1: The six hotels visited in Kent and Murcia**

<b>Hotels visited</b>	<b>Special facilities for children</b>
<b>Kent Hotel 1 (town)</b>	Baby listening services Child-friendly focus and attitude Children's menus Cots/cribs Garden/outdoor play area High chairs All children under 12 stay free of charge when using existing bedding All children stay free of charge and there is no charge for cots Family rooms available
<b>Kent Hotel 2 (outskirts)</b>	Babysitting can be arranged and children are welcome at meals. We also supply cots for babies.
<b>Kent Hotel 3 (coastal)</b>	Cots Highchairs Baby listening service Many common child-friendly facilities
<b>Murcia Hotel 4 (coastal)</b>	Free cots in rooms Rooms are fitted out for children Entertainment programme for children Kids' club Children's buffet Activities in the pool with a monitor
<b>Murcia Hotel 5 (outskirts)</b>	Cots and supplementary beds for children Games room is equipped with a child-sized table and chairs Bouncy castle No special child menus but willingly supply young children with small portions free of charge and prepare dishes that the children request All year round discounts for children 2 to 12 years sharing with parents (first child free, second child half price, third child 30%)
<b>Murcia Hotel 6 (city)</b>	Family rooms Extra beds for children and cots for babies Discounts and offers for children aged under 12 years

The coastal hotels in Kent (Hotel 3) and Murcia (Hotel 4) were first and foremost tourist hotels, and were family-owned. Both hoteliers said that they welcomed children and families:

This is a family owned hotel, is designed for children to enjoy the beach and the surrounding area. The [coast here] is the perfect setting for a family holiday with little children.

(Murcia Hotel 4, Interview Hotelier, 08.08.08)

A similar welcome to children and families was echoed by the town-based Kent hotelier (Hotel 1, Interview, 07.07.08) ‘Yes – we advertise ourselves as welcoming children’, Murcian hoteliers (Hotel 5, Interview, 07.08.08 and Hotel 6, Interview 25.07.08) and by Kent hotelier (Hotel 2, Interview, 08.07.08) who said that they welcomed children as long as they were well-behaved. As can be seen in Table 7.1, although special facilities for children at the hotels varied, these included baby listening services, children’s menus, cots and cribs, garden/outdoor play areas, highchairs, child discounts and family rooms. The hotelier at Kent Hotel 1 (Interview, 07.07.08) emphasised their *child-friendly* focus and attitude, and the Kent hotelier at Hotel 3 (Interview, 09.07.08) said that they provided many common child-friendly facilities and tried to cater for any of the children’s requirements the best they could.

In keeping with coastal Murcia Hotel 4’s identity as a setting for a family holiday, the hotelier (Interview, 08.08.08) spoke of its entertainment programme for children. The hotelier (Interview, 07.08.08) at Murcia Hotel 5 explained that they did not have special set menus for children but would ‘...willingly supply young children with small portions free of charge and prepare dishes requested by the children’. As can be seen in Table 7.1, there were fewer specific facilities for

children at Murcia city Hotel 6 but this could be because it was situated in the city centre and therefore predominantly attracted business travellers. When hoteliers were asked if they had any rules aimed at child guests, those from the two coastal hotels (Hotels 3 and 4) referred to safety rules that were related to children's use of their swimming pools and health clubs:

Children under the age of 14 are prohibited from entering the spa area unaccompanied by an adult and children under two years cannot enter. In the pool area, children must be supervised by their parents or relatives.

(Murcia Hotel 4, Interview 08.08.08)

Kent Hotel 3 also had safety rules in relation to its health club (Children needed to be supervised by an adult; a maximum of two children at all times, and were not allowed in the steam room, sauna or whirlpool spa). However, as demonstrated in Table 7.2 there were also restrictions on the times when children could use the swimming pool. The hotelier (Interview, 09.07.08) said that these rules were in response to some adults requesting child-free swimming times rather than being based on safety factors. This meant that children (under 16) could use the pool for just 26 hours a week whilst adults had unrestricted access to the pool for 55 hours a week. Consequently, it can be deduced that the children's restrictions at the Murcian hotel were based predominantly on safety factors whereas limitations on children's presence at the Kent hotel emanated from adults' demands for child-free times.



**Table 7.2: Kent Hotel 3 Health Club swimming times for adults and children**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Adult swimming times</b>	<b>Children's swimming times</b>
Mon – Thurs	6.30am – 10pm (15.5 hours)	9 am – 12noon and 2pm – 5pm (6 hours)
Friday	6.30am – 10pm (15.5 hours)	9 am – 12noon and 2pm – 5pm (6 hours)
Saturday	8am – 8pm (12 hours)	9am – 12noon and 2pm – 5pm (6 hours)
Sunday and Bank Holidays	8am – 8pm (12 hours)	9am – 12noon and 2pm – 7pm (8 hours)

The other two Kent hoteliers (Hotels 1 and 2, Interviews, 07.07.08 and 08.07.08) said that they did not have specific rules aimed at children but did expect that they would behave, respect and not disturb other guests staying at the hotel. Murcian hoteliers (Hotel 5 and 6, Interviews, 07.08.08 and 25.07.08) did not have rules but said that they expected the parents to ensure that children were supervised and respected other guests. As emphasised by the hotelier at Hotel 4:

We believe that the safety and good behaviour of children is dependent on parents and guardians and should not be left in the hands of hotel staff.

(Murcia Hotel 4, Interview, 08.08.08)

Nevertheless, in the event of children misbehaving, all six hoteliers said that, they would approach the parents about their children's behaviour. Adding that, if the parents were not nearby they would speak directly with the children. Specific examples of children's misbehaviour given by a Kent hotelier (Hotel 1, Interview, 07.07.08) were, 'annoying other guests' and 'being destructive'. The remaining five hoteliers seemed unperturbed by young children's behaviour and said they had not experienced any significant problems with this. The hotelier at Murcia Hotel 6 emphasised that 'children who came to their hotel were generally well-behaved' and added that 'Children are considered to be our guests so would be treated with the same respect as adults' (Interview, 25.07.08). However, the

hotelier at Murcia Hotel 4 drew attention to the problems they had experienced with groups of teenagers, both male and female, who came into the hotel from a nearby sports club. On occasions this had resulted in the expulsion of these teenagers, who, ‘...were treated in the same way as if it were adults that had broken rules or performed acts of vandalism that endangered their own personal safety or disturbed other guests’ (Murcia Hotel 4, Interview, 08.08.08).

Although emphasising that the majority of children who stayed in their hotels were from England, none of the Kent hoteliers had observed any particular differences in behaviour between the children from England and those who may visit from other countries. Perhaps because the Spanish hoteliers had experience of both English and Spanish children staying at their hotels, two of them felt more able to respond to this question. The hotelier from Murcia Hotel 4 thought that ‘*English* children’ hardly speak with the staff at the hotel because the majority of them do not speak Spanish and added ‘...they are embarrassed to check if we speak their language’ (Murcia Hotel 4, Interview, 08.08.08). The hotelier at Murcia Hotel 5 (Interview, 07.08.08) thought it was difficult to generalise but thought that ‘The English children seem to be calmer and quieter [than the Spanish children]’. Additionally, he noted that they seemed to adapt well to the Spanish *horarios españoles* (Spanish ‘late’ timetables) instead of the *horarios ingleses* (English ‘early’ timetables).

### **Observations at the hotels**

Although providing only a snapshot of what was happening in the six hotels the observations that I undertook, during my visits to these establishments, were compatible with the comments made by the hoteliers in their interviews. Young

children were mainly accompanied by their parents/carers whilst moving around the hotels. Nevertheless, despite the Murcian' hoteliers distinction between the English and Spanish children's behaviour, no particular differences were observed. However, children in the Spanish hotels seemed to receive more acknowledgement of their presence from employees in contrast to the children in the Kent hotels where staff mainly communicated with the children's parents/carers. Examples of this acknowledgement included interactions between employees and children. These interactions could be verbal or could involve touching behaviours such as patting a child's head (Research Diary, 25.07.08; 07.08.08; 08.08.08).

## **7.6 The Restaurants**

Three restaurant/bars were visited in both Kent and Murcia (see Table 7.3). These were located in proximity to the six early years settings visited for the first part of the study. All of them were independently run and did not belong to large chains of pubs, bars or restaurants. I also avoided visiting any eating establishments that were obviously aimed at families and were equipped with play areas such as playgrounds and ball-pits, or those that assigned segregated eating areas to people with children. Therefore, although there were eating establishments in both Kent and Murcia that did not permit children for various reasons (see Chapter 2), the restaurants that I visited admitted children.

**Table 7.3: The six restaurants visited in Kent and Murcia**

<b>Restaurants visited</b>	<b>Provision for children</b>
<b>Murcia Restaurant 1 (coastal)</b>	None
<b>Murcia Restaurant 2 (outskirts of town)</b>	Three highchairs
<b>Murcia Restaurant 3 (city)</b>	None
<b>Kent Restaurant 4 (coastal)</b>	Babychanging room Highchairs (on request) Children's menu
<b>Kent Restaurant 5 (town)</b>	Written rules for children Children's menu Colouring sheets and crayons
<b>Kent Restaurant 6 (outskirts of town)</b>	Babychanging room Highchairs (on request) Children's menu Children welcome notice

**The Kent restaurants**

Kent Restaurant 4 was a large pub style restaurant that was situated on the coast.

In the entrance hall, it had a prominent notice stating: *'No children – unless seated for a meal. Thank you'* (Research diary, 06.09.08). The representative of the restaurant explained that this notice had been posted as a result of consistently unwanted behaviour from some children:

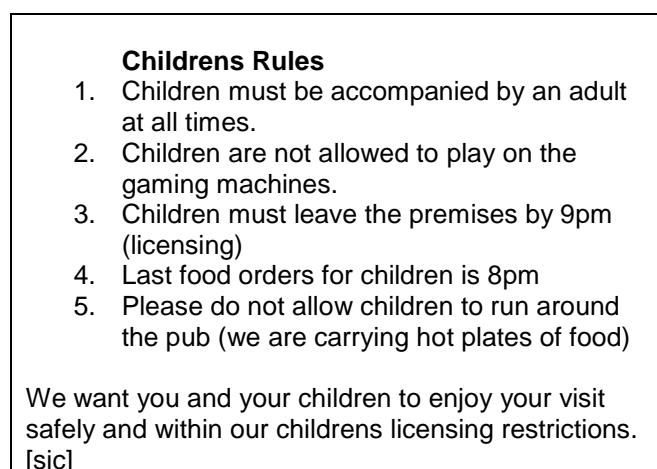
In the past we had many problems and complaints related to children running around in the restaurant, treating it like a playground. Since making it a rule that children must sit down at the table and eat, we would ask them and their parents to leave if they didn't sit down...As well as this being an important health and safety issue it is also annoying to other diners if children run around and make too much noise...

(Kent Restaurant 4, Restaurateur, 06.09.08)

Although there were no visible signs in the restaurant indicating specific facilities for children, when I went to the bathroom I noticed it had a separate babychanging room and several highchairs stored in an adjacent corridor. During the interview, when asked about *child-friendly* facilities the restaurateur said that they provided highchairs upon request but did not keep them in the main part of the dining area

as they did not want to promote themselves as being an overtly *child-friendly* restaurant. Nevertheless, the restaurant did have a ‘Children’s Menu’ that consisted of dishes such as ‘*Sausage, chips and beans*’.

As shown in Figure 7.3, Kent Restaurant 5, situated in the centre of a busy town, had compiled a list of rules directed at children that was displayed on the wall in the main eating area.



**Fig. 7.3: Children’s rules at Kent Restaurant 5**  
**Source: Extract from Research Diary, 19.09.08**

These rules were not as draconian as the restaurant rules featured in Figure 7.1 on p. 278 of this chapter. However, they did highlight some restrictions on children’s presence in terms of the behaviour that was expected of them by referring to legal restrictions and safety measures. As with Kent Restaurant 4, the interviewed restaurateur (Interview, 19.09.08) said that the rules had been compiled as a result of children’s negative behaviour but stressed that the rules were also related to health and safety requirements, and the licensing restrictions that applied to children (see Chapter 3). Despite emphasising the need for these rules he said they considered themselves a *child-friendly* place. This restaurateur was asked to define the term *child-friendly*. He explained that this was because the restaurant offered a ‘Children’s Menu’ and also provided children with colouring sheets and

crayons. These resources were provided to help children from becoming bored whilst waiting for their food.

Kent Restaurant 6 was located out-of-town in a small village, and had no rules displayed but the menu posted in the entrance hall stated that 'Children are welcome'. The restaurant had an extensive separate children's menu that included dishes such as '*Fresh Pasta: (not tinned Macaroni Cheese or Hoops!): served with tomato sauce, mozzarella and garlic bread sticks*'. This food was available between the same hours as the adults' menu. The interviewed restaurateur was keen to emphasise that although their menu was aimed to be *child-friendly* and inexpensive they never compromised on the quality of any of the ingredients. Restaurant 6 also had a baby changing room and provided highchairs. When this restaurateur was asked about children's behaviour he thought this varied between children, '...some children are very good at sitting down but others find it extremely difficult to do so'. He suggested that this was also dependent on the individual parents, '...most are fine but some leave their children to do whatever they want'. Nevertheless, he did not think it was necessary for the restaurant to have any written rules for children:

There are no written rules as such but we do ask that the children stay seated as much as possible...there is a lot of hot food being carried around. If a child was running around or disturbing other customers we would politely ask the parents to do something about their child's behaviour.

(Kent Restaurant 6, Interview Restaurateur, 13.09.08)

### **The Murcian restaurants**

All the restaurants visited in the Region of Murcia admitted children but, in contrast to the ones in Kent, made few concessions for them. There were no children's menus, or separate dishes for children, and highchairs were only available at one of them. However, there was no obligation or pressure to purchase a separate meal for each person dining, and many of the dishes were designed to be placed in the centre of the table for adults and children to share. In contrast to two of the aforementioned Kent restaurants there were no rules, or notices aimed at children indicating that they were welcome; as at Kent Restaurant 6.

Restaurant 1 was situated in a Murcian coastal town. It had indoor and outdoor eating areas which were open all the year round depending on the weather. The restaurateur said that he welcomed children but was also keen to add that '...people enjoy eating here on their own, as a couple and as a family' (Murcia Restaurant 1, Interview Restaurateur, 14.08.08). This restaurateur did not provide any special facilities for children or a children's menu but he added that his menu '...could be adapted well to suit both adults and children'. However, he did note that he expected children to sit down whilst they were eating and said he thought the behaviour of the children was dependent on the behaviour of the parents and how they conducted themselves socially whilst eating out. The restaurateur thought children learnt how to behave appropriately in social situations by sitting down with adults and learning from them. When asked what he would do if a child was misbehaving in his restaurant he responded by saying that it was the parents' responsibility to discipline the child:

It is up to the parents to speak with him or her. It is not up to me because I could end up entering into conflict with the parents...

(Murcia Restaurant 1, Interview Restaurateur, 14.08.08)

Restaurant 3 was located in the centre of Murcia and Restaurant 2 was positioned in an out-of-town setting. Both had indoor and outdoor eating areas, with the latter being used in the warmer weather. In particular, Restaurant 2's large outdoor space meant that it was transformed into an open air restaurant during the summer months, with the indoor area only being used when it was particularly busy. Both of these restaurants said that they welcomed children of all ages but, as Murcia Restaurant 1, made little or no specific provision for children, and when they did it tended to be slightly haphazard:

We have several highchairs for the very small children but we have even stacked a chair on top of another one if a slightly older child would like to sit higher up. We do not have a separate babychanging room or any other specific facilities for children, apart from a pull-down babychanging station in the ladies toilets. However, children of all ages visit the restaurant and they are very welcome here.

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Interview, Restaurateur, 22.08.08)

No particular provision is made – children just sit as adults at tables – we are a restaurant...

(Murcia Restaurant 3, Interview, Restaurateur, 18.07.08)

In discussing the food served for children, the restaurateurs at Murcia Restaurants 2 and 3 responded in a similar way:

There is no special menu for children but any of our meals can be adapted for children, and we are very happy for adults to share meals with the younger children, and provide them with extra



plates if they want to do so. Parents just have to ask if they need anything for the children.

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Interview, Restaurateur, 22.08.08)

We do not have a special menu for children but are happy for children to share their parents' meals or to produce a small plate of food from the menu for children. Our waiters will recommend food children will like and will bring children's food out first so they have more time to eat it.

(Murcia Restaurant 3, Interview, Restaurateur, 18.07.08)

Overall, the three Murcian restaurateurs were more complementary about the children's behaviour than the Kent restaurateurs:

Most of the children are well-behaved and sit at the tables with the adults. Occasionally some children do run around and get in the way of the waiters but this is not very common. I feel we are a very relaxed restaurant and that is why families come back to us many times.

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Interview, Restaurateur, 22.08.08)

However, even though the three Murcian restaurateurs did not have any written rules they still had certain expectations of how children should behave in their restaurants:

[We do expect children to sit at the tables...] because to run around is not a good idea with our many waiters bringing out lots of hot dishes. However, in summer we have the fountains outdoors which the children like to watch and visit from their table once they have finished eating their food.

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Interview, Restaurateur, 22.08.08)

[We expect children to sit down...] we do not have much room for them to move around so it would be difficult not to sit at the table...after all we are a restaurant so children and adults sit and eat...

(Murcia Restaurant 3, Interview, Restaurateur, 18.07.08)

If children did not conform to these unwritten rules the restaurateurs said they adopted the following strategies:

If a child is getting in the way of a waiter or waitress it would be expected that he or she would tell the child to sit down. Only if the behaviour was causing a problem and the child did not do as the waiter or waitress had asked them would we approach the parents.

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Interview, Restaurateur, 22.08.08)

If their parents had not noticed [their child was misbehaving]...we would speak to the parents if there was a big problem – but if a child was getting in the way of waiters we would ask them to move...or to sit down...

(Murcia Restaurant 3, Interview, Restaurateur, 18.07.08)

Out of all the six restaurants only Restaurant 2 provided a site where I could observe Spanish and English children's and adults' behaviour in the same location. The other five restaurants' clientele, on the days of my visits, appeared to comprise mainly people who lived in the local and surrounding areas. Nevertheless, two of the restaurateurs expressed opinions about their impressions of the differences that they had observed between the Spanish children who came to their restaurants and the children who visited from other countries such as England:

In general the behaviour at the table from the *extranjeros* (foreigners) is more polite and correct than that of the Spanish children...

(Murcia Restaurant 1, Interview, Restaurateur, 14.08.08)

It is difficult to generalise but I think it depends on how the parents discipline them and if they are used to sitting down at a table. The English children say lots of please and thank yous when we bring the food to them...

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Interview, Restaurateur, 22.08.08)

Based upon the observations undertaken in Restaurant 2, there were no noticeable differences in the children's and adults' behaviour that could be assigned to their national or cultural differences. Therefore, what could be considered appropriate or inappropriate behaviour was linked to my own perception of what I considered to be suitable conduct for eating out in a restaurant. Thus, in all six restaurants there were examples of children sitting down at tables and eating; children interacting with adults (at their own tables and with waiting staff); children becoming restless at sitting down, and children's behaviour being regulated by adults:

A male child aged about five years old (Spanish) is sitting at a table with a large group of adults. He is playing with a toy car (friction) on floor of patio – also plays at running down ramp. Adult, sitting at table, gives child small plastic ball, it rolls on floor and then child begins to bounce it. Ball bounces on to an adjacent table and knocks over an empty wine glass. He looks over [perhaps afraid that he will get in trouble]. Father of child scolds him and tells him not to throw the ball. When child gets in the way of waiters [several times] who are bringing out food they ask him to move – e.g. *Permiso, Cuidado* (Excuse me, Careful).

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Observation, 22.08.08)

In this second observation, at Restaurant 2, several British and Spanish children have brought handheld electronic games to the restaurant with them:

To my left, three British children are sitting at a table with four adults. The children are sitting in a row each playing on a Nintendo DS...Straight ahead, a Spanish child is sitting in a pram playing on a handheld computer game. Another Spanish child is sitting on a wall next to the pram playing on a Nintendo DS.

(Murcia Restaurant 2, Observation, 24.08.08)

I identified a number of differences between the Murcian and Kent restaurants which were pertinent to the restaurants' environments and the affective behaviour of the people that worked in these. For example, the staff in the Murcian restaurants were more likely to discipline children and also interacted with children more frequently than the staff in the Kent restaurants (Research Diary: Observations, Murcia Restaurant 1, 14.08.08 and 17.07.08; Murcia Restaurant 2, 22.08.08 and 24.08.08; Murcia Restaurant 3, 18.07.08 and 20.07.08; Kent Restaurant 4, 06.09.08 and 07.09.08; Kent Restaurant 5, 19.09.08 and 21.09.08; Kent Restaurant 6, 13.09.08 and 14.09.08). At the Murcian restaurants, on several occasions, I observed children (Spanish and English) accompanying (and holding hands with) waiting staff into the inside of the restaurant to select an ice-cream. There were also spontaneous examples of physical contact between adults and children in these restaurants (Research diary: Observations, Murcia Restaurants 1-3) as captured in the following example:

There has been a spillage on the floor near to where a family with two young children are just about to leave the restaurant after

eating. The owner of the restaurant scoops up the small children one at a time and lifts them over the spillage planting a kiss on the girl's head as he does so.

(Murcia Restaurant 3, Observation, 18.07.08)

Waiting staff in all the Murcian restaurants patted children's heads, held their hands and squeezed their shoulders (Research Diary: Observations, Murcia Restaurants 1-3). In contrast, there were no touching behaviours observed between waiting staff and children in the Kent restaurants (Research Diary: Observations, Kent Restaurants 4-6). However, a male waiter at Kent Restaurant 4, teased and winked at children when he brought them their meals (Research Diary, Observation, 07.09.08).

The noise levels in the Murcian restaurants were higher than the Kent ones. Any children who talked loudly (or cried) in the Murcian spaces were less likely to invoke a reaction from adults than their counterparts who made similar utterances in the Kent ones.

In summary, the Kent restaurants and Murcian restaurants that I visited appeared to differ in their approach to the family dining-out experience. The Kent restaurateurs seemed to have analysed this experience in greater depth than the Murcian restaurateurs. For example, Kent restaurateurs felt that they needed to make an explicit statement about whether children were welcome or not. This action was defined by their rules, their welcome notices and their child-friendly facilities such as highchairs and children's menus. In turn, the Murcian restaurateurs seemed to take it for granted that children ate out with their parents and expected them to ensure that the children behaved in an appropriate manner that was in accordance with the eating place they were visiting. Thus, the Murcian

restaurateurs seemed to feel that it was unnecessary to put in place any measures that defined them as child-friendly or not. Consequently, it was left to their customers to decide whether their restaurants were suitable places to bring children along to.

As noted by Natasha at Kent Setting 2:

...just because a restaurant has got highchairs...and a children's menu does not necessarily mean that children are welcome...it's to do with their attitude.

(Kent Setting 2, Interview, Natasha, 07.11.07)

## 7.7 The Shopping Centres

The following six shopping centres, as featured in Table 7.4, were visited in Kent and Murcia:

**Table 7.4: The six Shopping Centres visited in Kent and Murcia**

	<b>Special facilities for young children</b>	<b>Crèche available?</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
<b>Shopping Centre 1 (Kent) (SC1)</b>	<b>Kiddy car service;</b> <b>Parents' rooms</b> – equipped with bottle warmers, changing tables, private feeding rooms, nappy dispensers and microwave ovens; Specially designated parent and child parking bays for parents with pushchairs and small children. Rental of small cars equipped with a place to put in your shopping;	Yes Open Monday to Saturday between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm for children aged between 3 years and 8 years for up to 3 hours a day. Managed by private childcare/nursery company.	Shopping centre has a <b>Kids club</b> – by registering, parents receive special child related offers, advance notices of children's events and activities, and a directory listing services and facilities, children receive a welcome pack comprising rucksack filled with goodies, they also receive a birthday card each year and a letter from Santa at Christmas; Shopping centre is a ' <b>Child Safety Zone</b> ' – free wristbands for children are available on which a contact telephone number is written. In event of child getting lost, adult with child is contacted and reunited. There is also a hotline number to help parents/guardians find children who have been separated from them whilst out shopping ( <a href="http://www.childsafezones.co.uk">www.childsafezones.co.uk</a> ). There is also a 'Top Tips for Child Safe Shopping' list displayed.
<b>Shopping Centre 2 (Kent) (SC2)</b>	<b>Baby care rooms</b> with baby changing facilities, bottle warming, mothers' feeding area, dining chairs with highchairs and space for pushchairs;	No (There is a day nursery in the centre but this does not offer drop in crèche facilities).	Shopping centre won a Parent Friendly award; Child Safe Zones Shopping scheme (see Shopping Centre 1); Signs displayed informing what to do if child gets lost; Describes itself as a destination for the whole family.

	Pushchair hire		
<b>Shopping Centre 3 (Kent) (SC3)</b>	Baby changing facilities (male and female) in toilets	No	Child wristbands for safe shopping; Free playtime session at one of the children's stores one day a week 10.00 am to 12.00 pm (for children accompanied with an adult at all times); One off activities for children in school holidays i.e. visits from characters from children's TV.
<b>Shopping Centre 4 (Murcia) (SC4)</b>	<b>Baby and childcare facilities:</b> comfortable feeding room equipped with microwaves and hot bibs; nappy changing room; toilets adapted for young children;	No	Workshops for children – focusing on a variety of craft activities i.e. using lolly sticks, plasticine. Times of workshops: Mon-Fri 18.00 – 21.00 h; Saturdays and Fiesta days 12.00 – 14.00 and 18.00 – 21.00 h; Parking spaces for families; Rest area equipped with TV, playstation and comfortable chairs; <b>Play zones for children</b> For children 4+ i.e. Jumping: how high can you jump? (covered area); For children 5+ i.e. Motorcycle circuit: for those children who like vehicles with two wheels (outdoors); For children 3+ i.e. children's little train – children can play on there whilst their parents take photos and enjoy the fresh air
<b>Shopping Centre 5 (Murcia) (SC5)</b>	Baby feeding area: baby changing area, microwave, chair, sink and feeding room.	No	Unsupervised play area; Play area of organised themed workshops i.e. 'Making kites and fans', open from 18.00 h to 21.00 on stated dates and also 12.00 h to 14.00 h on Saturdays. Workshops for children from four years old, each one last approximately 15 minutes, whilst child is participating in the session a parent or guardian needs to be present.
<b>Shopping Centre 6 (Murcia) (SC6)</b>	Baby care and childcare facilities: Nappy changing rooms; Four feeding rooms – one in each set of toilets; Toilets adapted for young children; Pushchairs loaned.	Yes Supervised <i>Iudoteca</i> (playroom) (free but with a maximum stay of an hour): Winter opening hours – Mon – Thurs 18.00 h – 20.00 h Friday 17.00 h -20.00 h Saturday and holidays 11.00 h to 14.00 h and 16.00 to 21.00 h Summer opening hours – July 1 <sup>st</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> September from Monday to Thursday 19.00 h – 21.00 h Friday from 17.00 h to 20.00 h Saturday and holidays 10.00 h to 14.00 h and 16.00 h to 20.00h. The crèche organises workshops (that change weekly) and competitions i.e. drawing for children “...the crèche offers numerous activities to learn whilst they play”.	Four rest rooms; The shopping centre offers a free service of child wristbands, working on a radio frequency, that emit a signal when the child wanders away from an agreed distance from his/her parents. This is to help make this a space for all the family. To avoid the children getting lost in the centre this service allows the parents to know where their children all the time whilst they do their shopping. Parque infantil (Supervised play zone where children can play on inflatable castles, listen to stories, do handicrafts and spend a fun time with other children – there is a charge).

The interviewed representatives from all six shopping centres said that they welcomed children into their centres. Their responses are represented in the following comments: ‘Yes – always – we try to encourage parents to bring them along’ (SC1, Interview, 10.10.08); ‘Always welcome’ (SC2, Interview, 17.10.08); ‘Yes – we try our best to do so...they are important to us...’ (SC4, Interview, 26.08.08); ‘Yes always – they are important to our future...’ (SC5, Interview, 25.08.08); ‘Yes – we have lots of things going on here for them’; (SC6, Interview, 28.08.08).

As demonstrated in Table 7.4, it was notable that all the shopping centres were becoming more than places to purchase goods by providing additional non-shopping facilities and activities. All six shopping centres visited offered some specific facilities for babies and children; two of them had a crèche where children could stay whilst parents shopped. Interestingly, at the Kent crèche children could stay for up to three hours whilst children’s attendance at the Murcian crèche was restricted to one hour. In consideration of their range of facilities listed in Table 7.4 it was evident that all the centres were keen to present themselves as a fun family day out. This practice could be viewed as acknowledging, welcoming and even encouraging children’s presence. However, this could also be driven by recognition of children as potential present and future consumers (Gunter and Furnham, 1998; Clarke, 2005).

All of the shopping centres had rules displayed, but none were specifically targeted at children. When asked about any unwritten rules targeted at children, the representative from Shopping Centre 1 (Interview, 10.10.08) said, ‘No – they are always welcome’. Similarly, respondents said that children’s misbehaviour was not regarded differently than the negative behaviour of any visitors to the



centres, and children and parents would only be approached in very serious cases when security would be called in to deal with this (SC1; SC2; SC4). Shopping Centre 2 had a 'Code of Conduct' that the representative said would be applied to children as well as adults. Likewise, representatives from Shopping Centres 4 and 5 (Interviews, 26.08.08 and 25.08.08) emphasised 'We have rules for the centre but they are for everyone that visits not just the children'. The representative from Shopping Centre 6 (Interview, 28.08.08) added that 'It is the responsibility of parents to make sure children behave well and also the individual shops may have their own policies'.

Representatives were asked if they had noticed any difference in behaviour between the children in their own country and those from other countries. None of the representatives, except the one from Shopping Centre 5, felt there were any notable distinctions 'Not really' (SC1, Interview, 10.10.08); 'No – there is little difference' (SC2, Interview, 17.10.08); 'No – some behave – others don't – it depends upon how they have been brought up by their parents' (SC3, Interview, 24.10.08); 'Children are children but I think the English children are quieter and better behaved than those from Murcia' (SC5, Interview, 25.08.08); 'They all run, laugh and play' (SC6, Interview, 28.08.08).

In my observations in all the public spaces I collected evidence of children in both societies displaying a range of similar behaviours and no patterns of negative or positive behaviour could be specifically assigned to children in either Murcia or Kent. There were particularly noticeable examples of children's behaviour in both localities i.e. child playing with a large ball in a clothing shop in Murcia (Research Diary, SC5, 25.08.08), and a child riding on a scooter in Kent (Research Diary, SC2, 17.10.08). None of these children were reprimanded by any of the shopping

centre staff. However, all the shopping centres contained separate units comprising shops, eating establishments and specific facilities for children. Therefore, as I highlight in the conclusion, each of these units would have benefited from individual analyses.

## **7.8 Discussion of Findings from Part 2**

### **Barriers and facilitators to children's presence**

As the following discussion is predominantly based upon just 18 examples of adult controlled public spaces in Murcia and Kent, any assertions need to be viewed with this limitation in mind. However, the findings emerging from the data collected in the six hotels, six restaurants, and six shopping centres did have some parallels with my discussion of similar spaces in Chapter 2.

In all 18 spaces visited, it was apparent that the interviewed representatives' understanding of children and childhood had impacted on the provision that was (or was not) provided for children. In the Kent spaces children's categorisation as a generational group had resulted in more specialist provision having been made for them than in the Murcian spaces. Although specific measures were in place to cater for children's (and parents') needs in both Kent and Murcia these were more pronounced in Kent. Children's menus were a typical example; in Kent not only were these plates smaller but the food was also different from that of adults. In Murcia children's different tastes could be catered for; but overall hoteliers and restaurateurs considered that children would eat the same food as adults.

Consistent with Moss and Petrie's (2002) assertion, children's presence in these public spaces was welcomed or constrained as a result of adults' demands, fears and rules. These factors were more pronounced in Kent than Murcia.

Relationships between adults and children tended to be further institutionalised, and dominated by societal anxieties in relation to the place of children. This practice became apparent in the quantity of, and intention of rules in Kent establishments targeted at children and their parents. Some of these regulations in Kent were guised under the umbrella of safety factors, and could also be used as a tool to avoid approaching children (and/or their parents) if they were displaying what was conceptualised as inappropriate behaviour.

### **The environments of the public spaces visited**

The Murcian temporal and physical environments seemed to contribute to the creation of more tolerant societal attitudes to children. The *horario español*; the Spanish timetable, begins and ends later with a quiet siesta time in the afternoon as opposed to the *English timetable* which begins earlier, includes no rest period during the day, and ends earlier than the *horario español*. These different timetables seemed to impact on the times when children were expected to be seen in public spaces. Children (and adults) were observed in restaurants at a later hour in Murcia than their Kentish counterparts. Additionally, weekday children's activities in Murcian shopping centres often finished at 9.00 pm (see Table 7.4). The observations undertaken in public spaces identified higher noise levels in the Murcian restaurants, shopping centres and hotels in comparison to their Kent equivalents. Thus, if a child was talking loudly or crying in a Murcian restaurant it was less noticeable than if a child was displaying similar behaviour in a Kent restaurant.

### **Children's behaviour**

All 18 participants from the public spaces had expectations that the behaviour of the children that visited their establishments would not disturb other guests. However, overall Murcian representatives from the wider societies were less perturbed about children's behaviour than the Kent representatives. Indeed, two of the Murcian restaurateurs, one Murcian hotelier and a representative from a Murcian shopping centre thought that *English* children's behaviour was more exemplary than that of the Spanish children. In particular, the English children were considered to have better manners and to be more likely to sit down at the dining table. However, data from my own observations of children and adults in the public spaces in Murcia and Kent did not reveal any specific instances of behaviours that could be assigned to Kentish children or Murcian children. Moreover, it was the adults' behaviours towards children and the environments that reflected anomalies. As also demonstrated in my discussion in Part 1, Murcian participants seemed less likely to problematise childlike behaviour than their Kent counterparts.

### **Affective physical behaviour**

As I have discussed previously, Spain has been identified as being a more touching culture than England. My observations gave some support to this proposition. In contrast to Murcian spaces, there was an absence of physical contact between the staff and children in the establishments visited in Kent. The observed differences in affective physical behaviour between adults and children in Kent and Murcia raised questions about whether these interactions could be a reaction to child protection concerns, and litigation fears in the UK context (Moss and Petrie, 2002; Furedi and Bristow, 2008). Any similar fears about children (and

other adults) seemed less pronounced in Spain. The work of Baylina Ferré et al., (2006) revealed that participant identified obstacles to their intergenerational use of Spanish parks and playgrounds were related to equipment, maintenance and traffic rather than to the problematic behaviour of other people.

### **Health and safety**

As I spent just a day in each hotel and shopping centre, and made just two visits to each restaurant, any observations that can be made about the impact of health and safety factors on children's presence in these public spaces is limited. Hoteliers at Kent 3 and Murcia 4 both referred to safety rules in relation to their health clubs and pools. At the Murcian hotel these rules meant that children needed to be supervised by adults when using these facilities (with the intention of keeping children safe). However, at the Kent hotel, in addition to children being supervised by adults for safety reasons there were also constraints on their presence at certain times of day. These time restrictions were based on adults' demands for child-free times rather than health and safety factors. Some interviewed participants also thought that children and young people's reckless behaviour could also present a health and safety threat. Whilst referring to older rather than younger children, the hotelier at Murcia Hotel 4 thought that certain teenagers' behaviour could endanger their own safety. All six restaurateurs emphasised that children running around in the restaurants presented a health and safety hazard. In particular, they pointed out that serving staff were carrying plates of hot food and children could also present a tripping hazard to these members of staff.

At four of the shopping centres (all three Kent SCs and Murcia SC6) there was a safe shopping scheme in operation for children (see Table 7.4). This scheme

entailed the children being supplied with a wristband to enable children to be reunited with their parents/carers in the event of them getting lost. Murcia Shopping Centre 6's safety scheme was more sophisticated than the Kent schemes in that the child's wristband emitted a signal if the child wandered away from his/her parents. These measures were in place to protect children, and/or to reassure their parents that children would be safe whilst visiting these centres.

## **7.9 Summary**

In Parts 1 and 2 I have included evidence to show that children's acceptance into social situations could be associated with a range of facilitators and barriers. These factors became evident in the participants' discussion of ambivalent societal attitudes to children's presence in public spaces. The extent to which elements of the three themes identified in Chapter 6: risk, safety and resilience; affective physical interactions and behaviour management and the promotion of social norms became apparent in some participants' comments was variable. Differences in affective physical interactions in Murcia and Kent were particularly pronounced in some of the observations undertaken in the 18 public spaces. Participants' in both Murcia and Kent thought that children's behaviour impacted on their acceptance into social locations. However, childlike behaviour was viewed as being more problematic in Kent. Issues related to risk, safety and resilience were apparent in some of the public spaces' concerns about health and safety but less prominent than the other themes.

Overall, child-friendly facilities were viewed more positively by Murcian and Kent participants when they complemented opportunities for different generations to spend time together, rather than being used as a means to separate children

from adults. As aforementioned, the social inclusion of children into Murcian society appeared to be less problematic than it was in Kent. Less specialist provision for children in Murcia was more conducive to integrating them into intergenerational groups. Children's inclusion into society enabled them '...to participate in an essential world of relationships and activities in the local community and wider society beyond those available in the family' (Moss and Petrie, 2002, p.115). On the other hand where children's presence had been analysed in more detail, as in Kent, this had resulted in more specialist provision for them which could work to separate them from other generational groups.

In the final chapter I revisit the three research questions and discuss the findings of the research. I evaluate the methods used, the contribution made to the field of study and make suggestions on the way forward.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion of the research**

### **8.0 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the discussion of the previous chapters and brings together some of the themes identified in this study. I begin by presenting a summary of the research undertaken, and then discuss some of the main points from the results in conjunction with my three research questions. Following on, I place my own research in the broader context of previous research discussed in Chapter 4, and reference it to my two documentary review chapters (Chapters 2 and 3). I then reflect on the usefulness of the research methods employed, and the methodological stance that underpinned the study. Next, I suggest examples of further research that might be conducted, and propose how my study will contribute to future work in this area. Finally, I make some concluding comments including a brief update of developments in the UK relative to this topic in 2012.

### **8.1 Purpose of the research**

My inspiration for the research study was a personal ‘hunch’ that young children may be more accepted in social situations and spaces in Spain than in England. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1 and 2 this perception was reflected in national and international research reports and UK mass media sources. The substantive aim of the study was to identify cultural differences that may define adults’ attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain. Therefore, I was interested in determining any factors that affected how adults perceived young children. I also wanted to investigate how these factors impacted on the provision that was made for young children both in pre-compulsory early years



settings and in the wider societies. The study was underpinned by three research questions:

- Are there any differences in adult-child interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory early years settings in (Murcia) Spain and in (Kent) England?
- Do identified patterns of interactions in these early years settings, and practitioners' beliefs and values about children and child-rearing reflect the social location of young children within the cultures investigated?
- Are any differences identified in the pre-compulsory settings reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood?

The fieldwork research was organised in two parts. For Part 1 of the fieldwork I spent 13 days over a period of three- to four weeks in each of the six pre-compulsory early years settings; three in Kent, England and three in Murcia, Spain. In these six settings, I interviewed a total of 48 practitioners and observed adult-child interactions, relationships and practices. This undertaking addressed the first two research questions. In preparation for Part 2 of my fieldwork, situated in the wider society, I interviewed 18 parents/carers whose responses I merged with those of the 48 practitioners. Doing so helped me to become better informed about the provision made for young children in their local areas. For Part 2 of the fieldwork research, I visited 18 intergenerational spaces; three hotels, three restaurants and three shopping centres in the wider societies of Kent and Murcia. A day was spent in each of the six hotels and six shopping centres, and two visits

were made to six restaurants. In these spaces I interviewed 18 representatives, and observed adult-child interactions.

## **8.2 How the results addressed my research questions**

My first research question referred to the adult-interactions, relationships and practices in pre-compulsory settings in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain. Before focusing on the interactions, relationships and practices I looked at the structural aspects of these settings. As I report in Chapter 6, there were several defining features that differentiated the Murcian physical environments from the Kent environments. The Murcian physical settings were recognisable by their sparser child-focused resources, their large wall mirrors and their brightly decorated environments; that featured mainly adult-created artwork. In contrast, the Kent settings were more likely to display children's creative work, had a wealth of resources available to the children and therefore appeared more cluttered than the Murcian settings. The Kent children were able to choose from the range of available resources whereas the Murcian children were more likely to be allocated resources by practitioners. Murcian settings were noisier; a combination of music and children's and adults' voices. In the Murcian settings there were times of chaos that contrasted with the adult-initiated, group activities. Contrary to these highly-structured activities, in the Kent settings there was little evidence of either unstructured or highly-structured activities. Children frequently worked individually or in small groups alongside a practitioner.

My second question explored whether patterns of interactions in these early years settings, and practitioners' beliefs and values about children and child-rearing

reflected the social location of young children within the cultures investigated. Three relevant themes emerged from the observations and interviews. These themes comprised:

- risk, safety and resilience;
- affective physical interactions;
- behaviour management: the promotion of social norms.

During the interviews, practitioners from both Kent and Murcia spoke about their child-rearing roles in relation to the wider society. The Kent practitioners were concerned about the ‘perceived and real’ negative effects of the outside world or what James and Prout (2008) describe as ‘corrupt adult society’ (p.238). They viewed the children as vulnerable and in need of protection (Waller, 2006) and saw providing children with a safe place to play as an important part of their role. Equally, within the settings Kent practitioners were more concerned about health and safety issues and more anxious about external accountability and safety requirements than the Murcian practitioners.

The Murcian settings maintained a far more relaxed atmosphere towards risk and safety than the Kent settings. Although the lower staff-child ratios in the Murcian settings necessarily contributed to children having more independence and less time being observed by a practitioner, the interviews revealed that this was also a conscious choice as well. The Murcian practitioners expressed concerns about the perceived parental over-protection of the children and emphasised the importance of allowing children to experience freedom and develop independence.

Affective physical interactions were observed at all six settings on a daily basis and both Murcian and Kent practitioners believed that these interactions were important to children's development (Owen and Gillentine, 2011). Unlike the Murcian practitioners, the Kent practitioners felt the need to justify this practice whereas there was no evidence to indicate that the Murcian practitioners' nurturing behaviours had been reconsidered as a result of the culture of fear (Piper, Powell and Smith, 2006) that has emerged about touching children. Practitioners, and other staff, at the three Murcian settings displayed affective physical interactions including touching behaviours unquestionably.

Prioritised behaviours in the Kent settings included promoting manners, turn taking and sharing. Practitioners reminded children about the types of behaviours that were expected, and advised children of the consequences of not conforming to these expectations. Children who displayed non-desired behaviours in the Kent settings were sometimes threatened with not being able to play with popular toys such as bikes. Practitioners explained to children why they should not display this unwanted behaviour and offered alternative ways of playing or using equipment. Sanctions for displaying unwanted behaviours seemed to be harsher in the Murcia settings. Children were 'told off' sternly, or excluded from the group by being sent to another *aula* (classroom) or to the *Banco Amarillo* that served the purpose of a 'naughty chair.' Sometimes the behaviour was discussed with the whole group in the end-of-session *asambleas*. Practitioners from both Kent and Murcia, said that they sometimes avoided becoming involved in children's conflicts and disagreements as they felt it was beneficial for children to learn how to deal with these without adult intervention, giving children opportunities to learn and

develop with greater autonomy (Hoffman, 2010). Unlike the Murcian practitioners, the Kent practitioners also mentioned how it was sometimes necessary to intervene for health and safety reasons.

Addressing my third question entailed considering if these differences identified in the six pre-compulsory settings were reflected in broader societal attitudes to children and childhood. In common with the structural features of the Murcian pre-compulsory early years settings, the nine fieldwork sites visited in Murcia were noisier than the sites visited in Kent. Therefore, the sound of children; talking loudly or crying, was not as noticeable as in the nine Kent sites. In addition, some elements of the previously mentioned three themes identified in the pre-compulsory early years settings were more visible than others in the wider societies. As I discuss in the next section there were more examples of affective interactions between adults and children during the visits to the nine Murcian sites. No touching behaviours were observed between children and staff at the nine Kent sites.

With regard to behaviour management, children's behaviour could not be categorised as better or worse in Murcian or Kent public spaces. There were examples of children sitting still and being quiet, and children moving around, and being noisy (talking loudly or shouting) in both localities. It was difficult to make any substantive claims about the levels of health and safety that impacted on children's acceptance into the 18 intergenerational spaces visited. Nevertheless, it is likely that differences in culture influenced how children were supervised by adults (Guldberg, 2009). In particular, there appeared to be less anxiety about

making provision for special facilities for children that would keep them safe or tend to their childlike needs.

### **8.3 Situating my research in the broader context**

#### **Large-scale reports**

With regard to the macro level differences, in Chapter 1 I presented an overview of large-scale reports about children's well-being in which the UK fared poorly in comparison to other countries; including Spain. My research complements these studies by addressing some of the criticisms associated with large-scale studies. For example, the lack of fine-grained explanations in large-scale studies means that they fail to answer why questions and are not able to give attention to detail. My study also focuses on younger children who are frequently neglected in large-scale studies. Pertinent to my research, in several large-scale reports, the UK was placed below Spain on subjective well-being including relationships with adults, including family members. The UK's emphasis on personal liberty and individualism, and children's less than positive acceptance into wider society has been highlighted in some reports (Layard and Dunn, 2009; Cusworth and Bradshaw, 2009). My research supports some of these assertions. However, as I previously emphasised, underpinning the dimensions of quality are social constructions about childhood. As Gammage (2009) usefully explains '...what societies do with (or impress upon) their children and how they describe the versions of desirable and appropriate attributes has varied from century to century and culture to culture' (p.267). Indeed, some of the attributes that people living in the UK found so desirable about Spain in my review of mass media sources and in participants' responses may not necessarily be easily transferred between societies

and cultures. In turn, attributes such as affective physical interactions, fewer separate facilities for children and providing riskier environments may not score highly in material wellbeing reports.

### **Mass media sources**

My review of mass media sources in Chapter 2 indicated that child-focused stories in Spain and England were reported on differently in England and Spain. In effect, the manner in which the UK sources presented children in a negative light was resonant with critics of this practice (Madge, 2006; UNCRC, 2008; Aynsley-Green, 2010). Based upon my review, similar themes in relation to the social problems that impact on families' and children's lives were evident in both the UK and Spanish mass media sources. However, consistent with some of the Kent participants' comments discussed in Chapter 7, some of the UK sources painted a bleak picture of British adults' attitudes to children. The same sources often made reference to other societies such as Spain being more socially accepting of children. Similar views were reflected in a number of surveys summarised in UK news stories (BBC News, 2008a; Womack, 2008).

A common self-criticism of UK society was that children were being increasingly segregated from the world of adults. In particular, UK hotels and restaurants were highlighted as providing particular spaces and special facilities for children that sometimes worked to separate children and adults. Other examples of children being excluded from intergenerational spaces included events such as weddings (Geoghegan, 2008; Dolan, 2008) and holidays (The Open University, 2011; 2012). A recurring reason given for the creation of these

separate spaces was to protect adults from children's behaviour. This argument equated with the Dionysian image of the child (Jenks, 2005) who is born evil, and whose unfortunate characteristics and behaviours need to be ridded. As several authors have commented, certain types of children's behaviour may be privileged and may also be culturally bound (Hoffman, 2003, 2006 (cited in Clayton, 2006)).

Specific rules that were assigned to children in some of the Kent locations such as restaurants were reminiscent of similar rules that I drew attention to in Chapter 2. As Leach (1994) notes, some rules can discriminate against children and therefore should address all age groups or none. In Murcia rules did tend to be intended for all generations rather than just constructed for children (unless they had a legal foundation). Conversely, some arguments for integrating children into intergenerational spaces were to socialise them or to prepare them for adult life (BBC News, 2003; Milligan and Brayfield, 2004).

Albeit with a few exceptions, in the reviewed mass media sources (Juan, 2007; Santos, 2007), and based upon some participants' responses, it appeared less acceptable in Spain to express an intolerance of children or to question their presence in intergenerational spaces. However, consistent with participants' responses in Chapter 7, and also in relation to my visits to the hotels and restaurants, Spanish society provided less specific provision for children. Overall, the data from participants' responses in Part 2 of my study, and the visits to hotels and restaurants reflected some of the themes that I identified in the documentary review of mass media sources. A salient theme was that child-focused spaces and provision were not necessarily equated with children's acceptance in social situations. In summary, they could have an opposite effect which resulted in segregating children from adults.



### **Frameworks and policies**

In Chapter 3 I provided an overview of the social and educational policies, legal frameworks and curricular frameworks of the two societies. This review focused on Spain and England and where data was available; Murcia and Kent. The two areas had some similarities in relation to their early years curricular frameworks, their almost universal provision of pre-compulsory education and care for 3-5 year olds, and lower provision for under-threes. Nevertheless, there were some variations in societal attitudes towards disciplining children. These differences were most pronounced in two aspects of the two countries' legal frameworks that impact on children's lives. England's age of criminal responsibility is 10 years old whilst Spain's is 16 years old. The UK has declined to implement an all-out ban on slapping whereas Spain banned smacking in 2007. Spanish society's attitude to health and safety has been highlighted as being less stringent than that of the UK (Grenham, 2010). In my review, there was some evidence to support this proposition. The Spaniards' more relaxed attitude to children's use of fireworks, and their lower rating on child safety reports (Mackay and Vincenten, 2009) referred to in Chapter 3 are just two examples. Notwithstanding the impact of socio-demographic factors, and dependent on the available data on childhood accidents being accurate, a more laid-back response to health and safety may result in a higher prevalence of injuries. However, this less averse attitude to risk did prevail in the Murcian pre-compulsory settings, and did indicate a link between these settings and the wider society. In contrast, the Kent practitioners were more risk averse than their Murcian counterparts. The behaviour of the Kent practitioners was compatible with the views of authors who have written about the UK as being overly safety conscious and the resulting impact of this on children's

freedom (Madge and Barker, 2007; Gill 2007a). The Apollonian image (Jenks, 2005) that portrays children as innocent and in need of protection emerges in the range of measures to keep them safe. As highlighted by Saltmarsh and Davies, (2010) risk needs to be understood as a social construction rather than a truth.

Based upon my review of the available data on child abuse, Spain has a lower child homicide rate than the UK. However, it is apparent that child abuse is present at a regional and local level both in Spain and the UK; especially in children under five. In turn, both societies have detailed frameworks for protecting and safeguarding children. Nevertheless, the impact of some aspects of England's framework, such as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, have been criticised for creating barriers between generations (Furedi and Bristow, 2008). Intergenerational relations in Spain were not an issue of such high-profile debate as they were in the UK. As observed in the pre-compulsory settings, touching behaviours between practitioners and children were evident in all settings but emerged as less 'therapeutic', 'sanitised' and 'organised' (Piper and Stronach, 2008, p.3) in Murcia than in Kent. In the hotels and restaurants physical affective interactions between children visiting, and adults working in these establishments were absent from the Kent ones, but frequently observed in the Murcian locations. This difference in demonstrations of affective physical behaviour equates with the views of commentators who have referred to Spain as being a more touching culture than the UK (Piper, Powell and Smith, 2006).

### **Small-scale qualitative studies**

The decision to engage a small-scale comparative qualitative multiple-case study of pre-compulsory early years settings has been enlightening. Other researchers

who have undertaken comparative studies in early childhood have also yielded interesting results (Tobin *et al.*, 1989; Tobin *et. al.*, 2009; Lubeck, 1986; Farver and Lee Shin, 1997; Penn, 1997; 2005; Corsaro, 2003; Kwon, 2003; Rayna, 2004). As proposed by Lee (2010) sharing these findings enables us to challenge the taken-for-granted and opens up new paths to reconceptualise early childhood education. Consistent with my own experience, as McArdle (2011) proposes, studying other cultures can prove to be a powerful catalyst for viewing our own.

There have been few studies that have compared early years practices between England and Spain. Although Penn's study was published in 1997 and located in another region of Spain, several of her reflections on the Spanish nurseries had similarities with my own observations. In particular, her references to the more relaxed attitudes to health and safety, and unquestioned affective relations between adults and children in Spain (than in England) were resonant with my findings. The cultural differences identified between Murcia and Kent also had comparable features with the work of researchers such as Tobin *et al.*, (1989, 2009), Kwon, (2003), Rayna (2004), Pang and Richey, (2007) and Brougère *et al.*, (2008). Particular differences were noted in the relative promotion of children's autonomy, the affective relations between practitioners and children, and the respective levels of curriculum organisation and structure.

I had no intention to assign an individualist or collectivist label to either Murcia or Kent as elements of these constructs were interwoven, and were more accurately located on a continuum between the two extremes. However, the emphasis on group activities in the Murcian settings in contrast to the priority given to the importance of nurturing individual children's learning and development in the Kent settings did present a key difference that linked to these

constructs. In turn, the practitioners' relative promotion of children's freedom and the level of control they imparted were also indicative of some strands of individualism and collectivism. Extrapolating these constructs to the wider societies, Kent and the UK's more problematic fostering of intergenerational relations in contrast to Murcia and Spain may be underpinned by aspects of individualism and collectivism. For example, participants' examples of adults' attitudes to children's presence in their own localities highlighted differences in 'collectivist and individualistic approaches to responsibilities for children' (Waller *et al.*, 2010, p. 439). Murcian adults tended towards a collective responsibility to caring for children, whilst Kent adults' behaviour was perceived by participants as being more compatible with individual adult responsibility.

The three components of Super and Harkness' (1986) 'developmental niche' proved to be a useful framework for researching the physical and social settings, the customs of care and child-rearing, and the practitioners' ethnotheories or cultural belief systems. Locating my fieldwork within this niche provided a window into cultural beliefs (Harkness and Super, 2006) about the social and educational goals valued by societies (Rosenthal, 2003). However, in the pre-compulsory early years settings these goals both reflected and reacted to wider social practices. For example, as explained previously, in the Murcian settings the practitioners thought that the children were being over-protected in the wider society and sought to compensate for this behaviour. In contrast, the Kent practitioners wanted to make their settings into 'little havens' to protect children from the evils of wider society.

## **8.4 Reflection on the methodology and methods**

The methodological aim was to design a qualitative study that would enable me to become better informed about adults' perceptions of young children's social location in Kent, England and Murcia, Spain. My study gathered this information by drawing upon documentary reviews, interviews and observations.

The two documentary reviews usefully set the scene for the fieldwork. My review of mass media sources presented me with a wealth of rich data sources. However, on reflection focusing on just two newspaper sources (one in Murcia and one in Kent) for a shorter period of time would have made the task more manageable, and have resulted in a more focused analysis of the two areas investigated. In turn, the portrayal of children in mass media sources in different societies and countries, and adults' reactions to these sources has the potential to be explored by employing discourse analysis.

As aforementioned the fieldwork was initially located in six pre-compulsory early years settings, and then in 18 sites comprising hotels, restaurants and shopping centres in the wider societies of Kent and Murcia. Preparing my application for the Roehampton University Ethics Board for this fieldwork was a useful process for considering my own personal philosophies and beliefs (Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson, 2000). It also gave me an opportunity to reflect on the ethical questions and dilemmas that I would encounter throughout the research study. Consequently, the moral code that I constructed during this endeavour helped me to manage all phases of the research and the roles, responsibilities and relationships involved in this process (Aubrey *et al.*, 2000). Gaining access to the fieldwork sites in the two localities in different countries proved to be a time-consuming process. In Kent, access was negotiated by contacting the individual

pre-compulsory settings and communicating with the respective managers. With regard to Murcia, access was negotiated through the manager/owner at the private setting. In contrast, access to the two Murcian municipal settings was arranged by contacting and meeting officials at the local authority offices. For the second part of the fieldwork study representatives from the public spaces were contacted and access negotiated with these individuals.

Investigating the research topic using a qualitative approach enabled me to study these cases in depth and to describe the data in rich detail. An ethnographic approach allowed me to study the details of the participants' daily lives, in their cultural contexts (Troman *et al.*, 2006). The ethnographic self (Coffey, 1999) underpinned my role as the researcher. My reflection upon my self-identity in Chapter 5, rendered this transparent and emphasised my role as part of the research context. As a reflexive ethnographer, I combined participation and observation, and made use of interviews, observations and documents. These methods were key ways of generating knowledge without relying upon full immersion in the settings. Interviews and observations generated a wealth of data. These data allowed participants' personal experiences and viewpoints to come to the fore, alongside their actual behaviours. Although the interview schedules were semi-structured, I adopted a conversational style. Respondents were able to share their views at length whilst I was able to cover the issues I was interested in (Silverman, 2010).

In the transcription of these interviews and analysis of the observations there were many opportunities to reflect upon what had been recorded. The resulting data from the interviews and observations were revealing about participants' attitudes to child-rearing, and the social location of young children.

The research made use of a comparative multiple-case study approach in two socially and culturally diverse geographical regions. This approach stresses interpretation and subjectivity. Consequently, it follows that the nature of the regions from which the fieldwork sites were selected is likely to impact on the limitations of the findings of this research study. Notwithstanding that this is a given of this type of research, this restricts the degree to which this knowledge arising from this project is directly transferable to other areas. Whilst acknowledging the findings that have emerged from the fieldwork are particular to the environments of Murcia and Kent, I argue that some of these findings have the potential to be reflective of cultural differences in the wider societies of Spain and England. For example, when viewing these data in the context of my review of mass media sources there are several similarities between the two sets of data.

As I have explained previously, the findings from the hotels and restaurants in Murcia and Kent did reflect some of the issues that I discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis. Although all six shopping centres I visited were all centrally managed, the number of private retailers inhabiting these spaces, all with different commercial aims and targets, did make data collection more difficult than if I had visited just two comparable stores. As I suggest in the next section, comparing equivalent international commercial retailers located in the two areas may have made the data collection more manageable and focused.

## **8.5 Contribution to research**

Robson (2011) informs that reporting on research is an essential part of the process and emphasises that a study must be made public to count in research

terms. My small-scale study has enabled a reflection on some of the attitudes to child-rearing and young children in a comparative context. The findings from this study contribute to the early childhood literature that has considered children's experiences in early years settings and children's place in the wider society. My work also responds to Formosinho's (cited in Bertram and Pascal, 2012) urgent need for 'more detailed, fine grain qualitative studies' and can be placed alongside studies that are 'qualitatively orientated...and grounded in the real world of policy and practice' (Bertram and Pascal, 2012, p.2).

Although the impact of adults' attitudes on children's lives has been acknowledged (Beunderman *et al.*, 2007; Jones, 2009) few studies have placed adults' attitudes under the spotlight. My study contributes to this lacuna. To further inform the literature and research regarding early childhood and childhood studies I intend to continue to disseminate the knowledge gained from this study through a range of articles and presentations. These will be adapted in order that they are appropriate for both academic circles, the community of early years professionals, and also a wider public audience.

## **8.6 Further research**

The opportunities to continue this topic of research are many. Other regions of Spain and other areas of the UK would also be potential sites of investigation, as would different European countries. Similar research projects could also be undertaken looking at different ages of children and young people.

Focusing the research on directly comparable sites such as a British early years setting in Spain and a Spanish early years setting located in England would also be



valuable. This type of study would enable an exploration of the relationship between these settings and the wider societies. As suggested previously, there is the potential to position a similar study in global commercial establishments such as *IKEA*, which provide a researchable shopping centre, crèche and eating area under one roof. This international company, has locations in both Spain and England and has adapted the shopping experience, play areas and eating places to the localities in which they are situated, and would make an interesting site for a further comparative study.

However, most importantly, children could be involved in future research projects. For those adults who argue that children should be taken everywhere perhaps we should heed the words of three-year-old Isodoro from Murcia who was asked if he liked going to restaurants:

I don't like going to restaurants because the food is for adults and not for children. I don't like grown-up food. I prefer to eat at home.

(Extract from Research Diary, 17.04.08)

This reaction serves as a reminder of the importance of engaging young children in the day-to-day lives of their communities as both participants and contributors (Nimmo, 2008) and opens up potential channels for future research. This approach also recognises that children are experts of their own lives (Lansdown, 2005; Moss and Petrie, 2002; Christensen and James, 2008). Thus, having researched adults' attitudes to children and childhood, it now seems fitting to turn attention to the voices of young children and to listen to what they think about adults.

## **8.7 Concluding Comments**

### **Why embrace children's presence in wider society?**

What has become apparent, in my research, is that how the image of the child (or children as a group) is socially constructed will influence the type of provision that is made for the child and will also impact on the way that the child (or children) is received into the local or wider society both socially and physically. The following statement from the UNICEF (2007) report emphasises the importance of including children in the families and societies into which they are born.

The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born  
(UNICEF 2007, Report Card 7).

However, practices that work to segregate children from adults, many of which have been highlighted in this thesis, are clearly not supportive of this part of the declaration. In Spain, the existence of fewer areas where children may spend time away from the majority of the adult population means that they are more likely to be visible in intergenerational groups rather than operating in separate childhood worlds. Likewise parents of young children are less likely to be confined to 'family-friendly' or 'child-friendly' spaces.

Adults taking children out with them in England are increasingly becoming dependent on signs advising where and when they can take their children. In addition to the laws that restrict children's access in some public places, there

appears to be an increasing trend to find some public places such as restaurants and hotels displaying notices depicting themselves as child-friendly or family-friendly. These notices may also act as a caution to people who would rather be child-free that children may be present at these premises. People with children may also be under pressure to situate themselves in these specially designated areas, even though they may prefer to be with the rest of society. Therefore, separate spaces that have been designed for families with children may be acting as a division between those who have children and those who are child-free, and also by playing a role in separating children from adult communities. As emphasised in one of the five guidelines of the European Network Child Friendly Cities (2009) that emphasises the importance of an intergenerational approach in making a city child friendly:

Child friendliness does not imply that children require their own city but it does imply that children are recognized as citizens that are part of the entire city. Children should not be socially isolated.

Likewise, the practice of separating adults and children may not always be conducive to creating favourable environments for adults (Tonucci, 2004; Beunderman *et al.*, 2007). As Francisco Tonucci (2004) reminds us, '*...cuando la ciudad sea mas apta para los niños será mas apta para todos*' ('...when a city becomes more suitable for the children it will be more suitable for everyone') (p.34). This point was also echoed by the recently disbanded government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space; the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) (2011) who noted that '...a space that is good for children will often be good for adults too'.

## **The myth of ideological Spain**

In Chapter 2, based upon my analysis of popular media sources and some of the responses to these sources, a wistful image of the contrast between British approaches and ‘child-friendly’ Mediterranean societies such as Spain emerged. An element of this image appears to be inherent in some of the overly idealistic labels assigned to Spanish society. Similarly, O’Reilly (2000), in her ethnographical study of the British Expatriate Community on the Costa del Sol, emphasises how the Spaniards’ ‘obvious love of children’ (p.114; p.135) appears to be an accepted part of the package that British expatriates equate with Spanish culture. In the second paragraph of his book entitled *‘Paranoid Parenting’* Frank Furedi writes that he is always envious when he travels to Spain or France and sees that children as young as six or seven are able to walk to school on their own (p.v). Perhaps this statement held more resonance in 2001 and 2002 when the earlier editions of this book were published. However, in the updated version of 2008, despite proclaiming on the cover that this is a ‘Brand New Edition with New Introduction’ the same sentence remains in the book.

I argue that this observation alongside many of the comparative statements that I identified in Chapter 2 may represent an ideological view of what life is like on the continent. As this thesis has indicated, life for children cannot be said to be better or worse for children in Spain than it is in England; just different. Both countries can be seen to have their relative advantages and disadvantages, and one’s advantage is another’s disadvantage. Thus, my research indicates that the two societies prioritise different issues. For example, there tend to be more specific facilities, and more emphasis on safety factors for children in the British context, but this is partly because children tend to be more segregated from adult

activities in Britain. Thomas and Hocking (2003) suggest that in the UK there has been a propensity to ‘...enclose childhood, corralling it into dedicated spaces and institutions, when, in fact, we need to learn how to integrate it into the whole of society, without losing, ignoring or destroying its unique features’ (p.33).

Admittedly, the ideological view of Spain through a British lens appears to mask a variety of misconceptions. For instance, a commonly held belief that you can take children everywhere in Spain, fails to recognise that there are several spaces where children are out of bounds, albeit on a legal basis. Additionally, at times it seemed that the lack of specific provision for children, in Spain, meant that parents/carers may have no choice but to take their children with them. Another key factor is that in England negative attitudes towards children and potentially harmful images of children appear to be proclaimed loudly whereas in Spain less attention, particularly in media sources, is given to the promotion of these. Significantly, in England there does appear to be an ideological view that they do things better on the continent. Thus, it seems that the continent may be acting as to what Brehony (2009), responding to an article by Dejevsky (2009) in *The Independent* newspaper on the invisibility of the British conventional family, suggests could be a rhetorical device like a Golden Age or an ideal state – a stick to beat poor, deficient England with (Brehony, February 2009, Private e-mail). This is resonant with O’Reilly’s (2000), suggestion in her ethnographical study of the British Expatriate Community on the Costa del Sol that:

It is as if Spain, being a relatively backward country, symbolises the golden, romantic past of community and caring, of traditional values of family and responsibility (p.165).

This is aptly represented by one of her British expatriate interviewees, Ken, a bar owner:

[Spain is]... like Britain was in the fifties...children weren't shut away and hidden like they are now, like some sort of parasites, and families were close (p.115).

Or, as described by Giles Tremlett (2007), 'For *anglosajón* writers Spain has, until quite recently, always been 'the other' – a shining example of what they, themselves, are not' (p. 406). When visiting the pre-compulsory settings in Murcia, through my own cultural lens I initially regarded some of their cultural practices as being negative ones. However, after extended time in the field I began to question the essentiality of ample resources, high-adult-child ratios and cushioned or overly safe environments that I believed defined quality early years provision. In some cases it appears that certain cultural practices associated with Spain such as their 'laid-back approach' to health and safety may be interpreted favourably when viewed through a British lens.

Whilst writing this thesis I encountered several examples of places in Spain, including Murcia, where children were not admitted (see Chapter 2). This may be indicative that Spain is not necessarily the idealistic child-friendly society it is often promoted as from a UK perspective. Alternatively, it could also be a sign that Spaniards' attitudes to children are changing, or that the internet is giving them a voice to vent previously unexpressed comments.

Towards the completion of this thesis, *TripAdvisor*, an online international travel site that invites users to post reviews and opinions of their travel experiences, and to rate hotels and places visited, published the results of a

‘Travellers’ Choice Family Awards’ survey (TripAdvisor, 2011a). This survey was based on the greatest number of recommendations from reviewers who travelled with family. As a result Edinburgh and London were named as the second and third most family-friendly cities in Europe respectively, with Florence taking first place and Barcelona in fifth place (TripAdvisor, 2011a, 2011b). As Florence is home to the Innocenti Research Centre and a well-established UNICEF Child-friendly city this was perhaps not surprising. However, the following paragraph, albeit it focusing on material provision, is indicative that England may not be the child-unfriendly place that it is frequently purported to be:

The capital, Europe’s third most family-friendly city has well and truly overcome the perception that it’s unsuitable or too expensive for families. With so many attractions free of charge, including the British Museum, the Imperial War Museum, the Tate Britain, Tate Modern, the parks, the commons and more, London is both affordable and child-friendly. Other family attractions include the London Eye, Tower of London, London Dungeons and royal palaces (TripAdvisor, 2011b).

On a more pessimistic note, the Family and Parenting Institute (FPI) (2012) released a Family Friendly Report Card that in July 2012 assessed whether the UK is becoming a family friendly nation. This report looked at dimensions including economic situation for families, family friendly business and working life, service provision for families and children, and family friendly infrastructure and living environment. The resulting grade was a D+. Also in the context of the Prime Minister David Cameron, wanting the UK to become Europe’s most family friendly society in Europe, the previously discussed ‘Family Friendly’ scheme (FPI, 2011a) aimed to help UK businesses and services to be more welcoming to

families. The scheme includes participating organizations displaying ‘We are Family Friendly’ signs on their doors. Eighty seven per cent of parents surveyed for the Family Friendly Populus Poll (FPI, 2011d) said these signs would make them possibly or definitely more willing to step inside. However, based upon some of my findings, this may be just another well-intentioned scheme that may lead to the further segregation of children and adults in the UK. Family Friendly signs may encourage some people to step inside but may act as a deterrent to other people who want to avoid children to use these signs for other motives. Therefore, perhaps making spaces intergenerational-friendly for all, rather than child-friendly (for a minority) may be a more desirable direction of travel.



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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Dates of visits to six pre-compulsory early years settings and Provisional fieldwork plan(s)

Setting identifier	Dates of fieldwork
Kent Setting 1 (Coastal)	<b>(Initial visit:</b> 24.09.07) 25.09.07; 26.09.07; 27.09.07; 02.10.07; 03.10.07; 04.10.07; 09.10.07; 10.10.07; 11.10.07; 16.10.07; 17.10.07; 18.10.07.
Kent Setting 2 (Outskirts)	<b>(Initial visit:</b> 29.10.07) 30.10.07; 31.10.07; 01.11.07; 06.11.07; 07.11.07; 08.11.07; 13.11.07; 14.11.07; 15.11.07; 20.11.07; 21.11.07; 22.11.07
Kent Setting 3 (Urban)	<b>(Initial visit:</b> 26.11.07) 27.11.07; 28.11.07; 29.11.07; 30.11.07; 04.12.07; 05.12.07; 06.12.07; 07.12.07; 10.12.07; 11.12.07; 12.12.07; 13.12.07
Murcia Setting 4 (Coastal)	<b>(Initial visit:</b> 26.10.07) 15.01.08; 16.01.08; 17.01.08; 22.01.08; 23.01.08; 24.01.08; 29.01.08; 30.01.08; 31.01.08; 05.02.08; 06.02.08; 07.02.08
Murcia Setting 5 (Urban)	<b>(Initial visit:</b> 18.04.07) 22.04.08; 24.04.08; 28.04.08; 29.04.08; 09.05.08; 14.05.08; 15.05.08; 19.05.08; 21.05.08 23.05.08; 27.05.08; 29.05.08
Murcia Setting 6 (Outskirts)	<b>(Initial visit:</b> 21.04.07) 23.04.08; 25.04.08; 30.04.08; 08.05.08; 12.05.08; 13.05.08; 16.05.08; 20.05.08; 22.05.08; 26.05.08; 28.05.08; 30.05.08

Provisional plan of research weeks in pre-compulsory Settings (Kent)
<b>Week One (three days):</b> Orientation - getting to know settings, practitioners, children; taking photographs of setting (set-up etc.)
<b>Week Two (three days):</b> Interviews - with practitioners (interviews to be recorded)
<b>Week Three (three days):</b> Filming - interactions; key times
<b>Week Four (three days):</b> Observing – interactions; feedback from staff

Plan provisional de la investigación en escuelas infantiles (Murcia)
<b>Semana una (tres días):</b> Orientación - familiarise con las escuelas infantiles, las maestras, los profesionales, los niños; sacar fotografías del escuela infantil ('set-up', etc.)
<b>Semana dos (tres días):</b> Entrevistas - con los profesionales (entrevistas grabados)
<b>Semana tres (tres días):</b> Rodar/filmar - interacciones; tiempos claves del día
<b>Semana cuatro (tres días):</b> Observación - interacciones; comentarios recibidos de las personal/educadoras/maestras

## **Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Schedule (Practitioners in Pre-compulsory early years settings - England)**

**“A comparative case study of pre-compulsory early years settings, and attitudes to child-rearing and young children in England and Spain?”**

### **Interview Schedule (Practitioners)**

**Thank you for agreeing to contribute to the study. I can assure you that this interview is completely confidential, and you won't be named in any publication arising from my research.**

#### **Personal Details**

How long have you worked in early years?

Do you have qualifications relevant to your work in early years? If so, what are they?

How long have you worked at this current setting?

What is your position at this setting?

Can you give a brief explanation of your current responsibilities?

#### **Beliefs, perceptions, attitudes towards young children**

Could you begin by telling me how you came to work in early years?

What personal beliefs (or theories) inform your work as an early years practitioner?

How would you describe your role at the setting? For example, do you view yourself as a carer, teacher?

If you go to a restaurant, hotel or shopping centre do you feel there should be separate areas for children or is it appropriate for some hotels and restaurants to have a 'no children policy'?

In your experience, if a child starts to cry in a public place such as a restaurant [a supermarket etc.] what is the reaction from other people?

Do you think there is any difference between attitudes to childcare in England [Spain] and other parts of Europe?

### **The setting - organisation, policy and practice**

Do you draw on any written guidance to inform your work/practice in early years?

If so, do you find this guidance helpful?

What do you think are the three most important things your setting can offer to the children who attend?

Can you give some examples of how and when you interact with the children? Are there any key times/particular activities where you feel the interactions are more frequent or valuable?

Are there times when you feel that it is appropriate not to interact with the children?

### **Defining the terms ‘child-centred’ and ‘child-friendly’**

What do you understand by the term ‘child-centred’? Could you give an example?

Would you say that your setting is ‘child-centred’? If so, in what ways?

What do you understand by the term ‘child-friendly’? Could you give an example?

Do you think there are enough places for children to play nearby?

What about ‘family-friendly’?

Are children welcome in [shops, restaurants etc.] round here?

## **(Questions for Supervisors/Managers)**

### **Parents/Carers**

Who drops the children off at your setting – parents, grandparents, professional carers i.e. childminders; nannies?

What role do parents/carers undertake at your setting?

### **The local environment**

Do you make use of the immediate environment? If so, in what ways?

Do you invite people from the local area/community into your setting? If so, could you give an example?

Do you feel that your setting has a good relationship with the people who live in the local area?

### **Closing comments**

Thank you for taking part in this interview.

Do you have any other questions or comments relevant to the research topic that you would like to share?



## **Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Schedule (Practitioners in Pre-compulsory early years settings - Spain)**

### **"Un proyecto comparativo de los parvularios no obligatorios, y las actitudes de la crianza de los niños y niños pequeños en (Kent) Inglaterra y en (Murcia) España"**

#### **Cuestionario (Profesionales)**

Gracias por acceder a contribuir al proyecto. Les puedo asegurar que este cuestionario es completamente confidencial, y no se le nombrará en ninguna publicación derivadas de mi investigación.

#### **Datos personales**

¿Para cuánto tiempo has trabajado con los niños pequeños?

¿Tiene títulos para tu trabajo con los niños? Si es así, ¿cuáles son?

¿Para cuánto tiempo has trabajado en el Centro de Educación Infantil?

¿Cuál es tu posición en el Centro de Educación Infantil?

¿Puedes darme una breve explicación de tus actuales responsabilidades?

#### **Las creencias, las percepciones, las actitudes hacia los niños pequeños**

¿Podría comenzar, por decir que cómo o por qué has elegido a trabajar con los niños pequeños?

¿Tienes teorías u opiniones en las que basas tu tarea diaria?

¿Cómo describiría tu papel/propósito en el Centro de Educación Infantil?  
¿Por ejemplo, ves como una cuidadora, maestra?

Si vas a un restaurante, hotel o centro comercial: ¿te piensas que deben existir zonas separadas para los niños?

¿Piensas que es apropiado para algunos hoteles y restaurantes tener una política de no admitir los niños?

¿En tu experiencia, si un niño comienza a llorar en un lugar público, como un restaurante [o un supermercado etc.] - ¿Cual es la reacción de la otra gente?

¿En tu opinión - crees que hay algunas diferencias entre las actitudes hacia el cuidado de los niños en [España] y en otras partes de Europa? [Si es así] ¿Qué piensas son las diferencias y por qué?

## **El establecimiento - la organización, la política y la práctica**

¿Qué crees que son las tres cosas más importantes que el Centro de Educación Infantil puede ofrecer a los niños que atienden?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

¿Puedes dar algunos ejemplos de cómo y cuando haces interacciones con los niños?

¿En tu experiencia - hay algunos tiempos claves/actividades particular en las que te piensas las interacciones son más frecuentes o valiosas?

[En el otro lado] ¿Hay ocasiones en que crees que no es apropiado para interactuar con los niños?

¿Crees que hay suficientes lugares para que los niños jueguen cerca de aquí? (Por ejemplo, en ...).

¿In tu opinión, los niños están/son bienvenidos en [tiendas, restaurantes, etc.] por ahí?

**Gracias por participar en esta entrevista.**

¿Tienes otras preguntas o comentarios de interés para el tema de investigación que te gustaría compartir?

## **(Preguntas para Gerentes)**

### **Los padres / cuidadores**

¿Quién entrega a los niños frente a tu establecimiento (Centro de Educación Infantil...) - los padres, los abuelos, es decir, los cuidadores profesionales que cuidan de los niños; niñeras?

¿Qué papel desempeñan los padres/cuidadores a realizar su establecimiento?

### **La localidad**

¿Hacer uso de la localidad con los niños? [Si es así], ¿de qué manera?

¿Invitas a la gente de la zona y la comunidad en el Centro de Educación Infantil? [Si es así], ¿podrías dar un ejemplo?

¿Piensas que Centro de Educación Infantil tiene una buena relación con la gente que vive en el área local?

### **Enlaces**

¿Estaría interesado en realizar enlaces con los “escuelas” en Inglaterra (que yo he visitado durante el proyecto)?

### **Gracias por participar en esta entrevista.**

¿Tienes otras preguntas o comentarios de interés para el tema de investigación que te gustaría compartir?

## **Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Schedule - Parents/Carers (English)**

### **Parent/Carer Questions (England)**

Do you think there should be separate areas for children in restaurants, hotels and shopping centres?

Do you think it is appropriate for some hotels and restaurants to have a policy to not admit children?

In your experience if a child begins to cry in a public place such as a restaurant or supermarket etc. – What is the reaction from the other people?

In your opinion, do you think there are any differences between the attitudes towards children in [England] and in other parts of Europe? If so, what do you think these differences are and why?

Do you think there are enough places for children to play in this area?

In your opinion are the children welcomed in shops, restaurants around here?

Do you think that the UK should introduce a 'smacking' ban?

Do you think that children today are over-protected?

Do you think it is appropriate for a mother to breastfeed her child in a public place such as a restaurant?

Do you think there are enough special facilities for children in public places such as restaurants, shopping centres etc.?

## **Appendix E: Semi-structured Interview Schedule - Parents/Carers (Spanish)**

### **Parent/Carer Questions (Preguntas por padres/tutores) (Spain)**

Si vas a un restaurante, hotel o centro comercial: ¿te piensas que deben existir zonas separadas para los niños?

¿Piensas que es apropiado para algunos hoteles y restaurantes tener una política de no admitir los niños?

¿En tu experiencia, si un niño comienza a llorar en un lugar público, como un restaurante [o un supermercado etc.] - ¿Cual es la reacción de la otra gente?

¿En tu opinión - crees que hay algunas diferencias entre las actitudes hacia el cuidado de los niños en [España] y en otras partes de Europa? [Si es así] ¿Qué piensas son las diferencias y por qué?

¿Crees que hay suficientes lugares para que los niños jueguen cerca de aquí? (Por ejemplo, en Murcia).

¿En tu opinión, los niños están/son bienvenidos en [tiendas, restaurantes, etc.] por ahí?

¿Estas de acuerdo con la ley (desde diciembre 2007 – el año pasado) que ha prohibido castigo físico?  
[El castigo en el Código Civil Artículo 154]

¿Hoy en día crees que los niños están súper protegidos?

¿Piensas que sería apropiado que una madre diera al pecho a su niño en un sitio público, por ejemplo en un restaurante?

¿Crees que hay bastantes instalaciones para niños en sitios públicos, por ejemplo en restaurantes y centros comerciales?

**Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview Schedules (Key Informants – (a) Restaurateurs, (b) Hoteliers, (c) Representatives from Shopping Centres)**

**(a) Restaurants/Restaurantes (England (Kent) and Spain (Murcia))**

¿Acogen bien a los niños en este restaurante?

[Do you welcome children at this restaurant?]

¿Hay una carta especial o raciones más pequeños para niños?

[Do you have a special menu for children [or serve smaller portions for children]?]

¿Hay algunas instalaciones especiales para los niños? Por ejemplo, sillas altas para niños o un 'cambiador'.

[Do you have any special facilities for children? For example, highchairs or a baby-changing room].

¿Protesta Vd. contra las madres dando el pecho a los bebés en el restaurante?

[Would you have any objections if a mother wanted to breastfeed her young child in the restaurant?]

¿Espera Vd. que los niños se queden sentados en la mesa cuando están en el restaurante?

[Do you expect children to sit at the table if they come along to the restaurant?]

¿Puede hacer algún comentario sobre el comportamiento de los niños cuando están en el restaurante?

[Can you comment on the children's behaviour whilst they are at the restaurant?]

¿Ha notado Vd. algunas diferencias entre el comportamiento de los niños españoles y los niños extranjeros?

[Do you notice any difference in behaviour between the children from this country, and the children who may come from different countries?]

¿Si un niño estuviera portándose mal, usted hablaría con él (o los padres)?

[If a child was 'misbehaving' would you approach the child [or the parents]?]

## **(b) Hotels/Hoteles (England (Kent) and Spain (Murcia))**

¿Acogen bien a los niños en este hotel?  
[Do you welcome children at this hotel?]

¿Hay algunas instalaciones especiales para los niños? Por ejemplo, cunas o actividades organizadas.  
[Do you have any special facilities for children at the hotel?]

¿Hay algunas reglas dirigidas a los niños que vienen al hotel?  
[Do you have any rules aimed at children who visit the hotel?]

¿Ha notado alguna diferencia entre el comportamiento de los niños españoles y los niños extranjeros?  
[Do you notice any difference in behaviour between the children from this country, and the children who may come from different countries?]

¿Si un niño estuviera portándose mal, usted hablaría con el (o los padres)?  
[If a child was 'misbehaving' would you approach the child [or the parents]?]

¿Tienes otras preguntas o comentarios de interés para el tema de investigación que te gustaría compartir?  
[Do you have any other questions or questions relevant to the research that you would like to share?]



**(c) Representatives from Shopping  
Centres/Representantes de Centros de Comerciales**

¿Acogen bien a los niños en este centro comercial?  
[Do you welcome children into the shopping centre?]

¿Hay algunas instalaciones especiales para los niños? Por ejemplo,  
'Cambiador de pañales'; 'Sala de lactancia'.  
[Do you have any special facilities for children in the shopping  
centre?]  
For example, 'Baby-changing facilities'.

¿Hay algunas reglas dirigidas a los niños que vienen al centro  
comercial?  
[Do you have any rules aimed at children who visit the shopping  
centre?]

¿Ha notado Vd. alguna diferencia entre el comportamiento de los niños  
españoles y los niños extranjeros?  
[Do you notice any difference in behaviour between the children from  
this country, and the children who may come from different  
countries?]

¿Si un niño estuviera portándose mal en el centro comercial, usted  
hablaría con el (o los padres)?  
[If a child was 'misbehaving' in the shopping centre would you approach  
the child or the parents?]

¿Tienes otras preguntas o comentarios de interés para el tema de  
investigación que te gustaría compartir?  
[Do you have any other questions or comments that you would like to  
share that are relevant to the Project?]

## Appendix G: Table of Interview Participants and Dates of Interviews

Kent Practitioners	Interview Date	Murcia Practitioners	Interview Date	Parents	Interview Date	Representatives from intergenerational spaces	Interview Date
<b>Setting 1</b>		<b>Setting 4</b>		Kent Parent 1	03/09/08	<b>Hoteliers</b>	
Jackie	10/10/07	Blanca	31/01/08	Kent Parent 2	05/09/08	Kent Hotel 1	07/07/08
Judy	04/10/07	Laura	31/01/08	Kent Parent 3	06/09/08	Kent Hotel 2	08/07/08
Carol	02/10/07	Nadia	05/02/08	Kent Parent 4	06/09/08	Kent Hotel 3	09/07/08
Margaret	02/10/07	Alexia	06/02/08	Kent Parent 5	07/09/08	Murcia Hotel 4	08/08/08
Jen	03/10/07	Ava	05/02/08	Kent Parent 6	07/09/08	Murcia Hotel 5	07/08/08
Heather	17/10/07	Amalia	30/01/08	Murcia Parent 1	24/04/08	Murcia Hotel 6	25/07/08
<b>Setting 2</b>		Rubi	22/01/08	Murcia Parent 2	28/04/08	<b>Restaurateurs</b>	
Lynn	22/11/07	Roberta	22/01/08	Murcia Parent 3	30/04/08	Murcia Restaurant 1	14/08/08
Rowena	21/11/07	Mariana	22/01/08	Murcia Parent 4	01/05/08	Murcia Restaurant 2	22/08/08
Shirley	08/11/07	Lola	22/01/08	Murcia Parent 5	13/05/08	Murcia Restaurant 3	18/07/08
Sam	06/11/07	<b>Setting 5</b>		Murcia Parent 6	13/05/08	Kent Restaurant 4	06/09/08
Natasha	07/11/07	Felicia	28/04/08	Expatriate Parent 1	13/01/09	Kent Restaurant 5	19/09/08
Harriet	08/11/07	Paula	28/04/08	Expatriate Parent 2	18/05/08	Kent Restaurant 6	13/09/08
Bella	07/11/07	Mara	29/04/08	Expatriate Parent 3	02/05/08	<b>Shopping centres (SC)</b>	
<b>Setting 3</b>		Eugenia	29/04/08	Expatriate Parent 4	06/05/08	Kent SC1	10/10/08
Louise	06/12/07	Patricia	09/05/08	Expatriate Parent 5	07/05/08	Kent SC2	17/10/08
Anna	06/12/07	Marina	14/05/08	Expatriate Parent 6	06/05/08	Kent SC3	24/10/08
Naomi	05/12/07	Maribel	14/05/08			Murcia SC4	26/08/08
Mel	11/12/07	Marcela	15/05/08			Murcia SC5	25/08/08
Glenda	11/12/07	Estafania	21/05/08			Murcia SC6	28/08/08
Fran	12/12/07	<b>Setting 6</b>					
Felicity	12/12/07	Monica	08/05/08				
Alma	11/12/07	Miranda	12/05/08				
Esther	12/12/07	Angelina	12/05/08				
Sarah	11/12/07	Alma	16/05/08				
		Azura	20/05/08				
		Esmeralda	20/05/08				

## **Appendix H: The data resource**

Data collection methods (Interviews and observations) at the fieldwork settings (six pre-compulsory early years settings; six hotels, six restaurants, six shopping centres) resulted in a large data resource, comprising:

- 15 hours of video observations of child/adult interactions in early years settings
- Approximately 50 pages of video log
- Approximately 20 hours of audio recordings of interviews with early years practitioners
- 266 pages of interview transcriptions with early years practitioners
- Approximately 50 pages of interview transcriptions with parents who have spent time in the two countries (eight hours of audio recordings)
- Approximately 30 pages of interview transcriptions with adults who negotiate the place of young children on a regular basis, in public spaces such as restaurants, hotels and shopping centres (six hours of audio recordings)
- Approximately 600 A4 handwritten field notes (including a total of 21 hours of written observations at six pre-compulsory early years settings and a total of 36 hours at hotels, restaurants and shopping centres)
- Approximately 200 A4 handwritten diary notes (written retrospectively)

## **Appendix I: Consent Form (English)**



### **ETHICS BOARD**

#### ***RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM***

##### **Title and brief description of Research Project:**

**Title:** A comparative case study of pre-compulsory early years settings, and attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain).

##### **Brief description of Research project:**

The above study will begin by looking at the interactions (of adults and children) and practices within a sample of early years settings in both Murcia (Spain) and Kent (England). In doing so, it is hoped that any differences in policy and practice between the two countries will be identified. Following on from this, people who work in restaurants, hotels and shopping centres will be interviewed to find out about their attitudes to young children. Children and adults will also be observed in these public places. Additionally, parents and carers in the two countries will be interviewed to find out about their experiences of child-rearing.

##### **Name and status of Investigator:**

Chris Gomez (PhD Student at the University of Roehampton, London)

##### **Consent Statement:**

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings:

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

## Appendix J: Consent Form (Spanish)



### JUNTA DE ÉTICA

#### FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO POR PARTICIPANTES

##### Título y descripción breve del estudio:

**Título:** Un estudio comparativo de las escuelas infantiles, y actitudes hacia niños y la crianza de ellos en Kent (Inglaterra) y Murcia (España).

##### Descripción breve del estudio:

La primera parte del estudio comenzará enfocando a las interacciones (de adultos y de niños) y las prácticas dentro de unas escuelas infantiles en la región de Murcia (España) y el condado de Kent (Inglaterra). Al hacer eso, se espera que se identifiquen algunas semejanzas y diferencias en la política y la práctica entre los dos países. Después de esto, en la segunda parte del estudio, realizaré entrevistas con la gente que trabaja en restaurantes, hoteles y centros de compras para determinar sus actitudes a los niños jóvenes. También, observaré a los niños y a los adultos en estos lugares públicos. Además, hablaré con los padres y los 'tutores' en los dos países para descubrir sus experiencias de criar los niños.

##### Nombre y situación de la Investigadora:

Chris Gómez (Estudiante doctoral a la Universidad de Roehampton, Londres)

**Por favor: si usted tiene una preocupación por algún aspecto de su participación, por favor habla con la investigadora (Chris Gómez) o el 'Director of Studies' de la investigadora (Professor (catedrático) Kevin Brehony):**

**Nombre:** Chris Gomez (Investigadora)

**Dirección:** Early Childhood Research Centre, Roehampton University

**Numero de teléfono directo:** 00 44 1242 251375

**Email:** cgo2608@aol.com o gomez@c@roehampton.ac.uk

**Name:** Professor (catedrático) Kevin Brehony (Director of Studies)

**Dirección:** Early Childhood Research Centre, Roehampton University,

**Numero de teléfono directo:** 00 44 208 392 3881

**E-mail:** K.Brehony@roehampton.ac.uk

##### Declaración de Consentimiento:

Consiento participar en esta investigación, y soy consciente de que soy libre de retirar en cualquier punto. Entiendo que la información que proporciono será tratada en confianza por el investigador y que mi identidad será protegida en la publicación de cualquier conclusión:

Nombre y Apellido.....

Firma.....

Fecha.....

## **Appendix K: Information about the Research Project (English)**



### **Information about the Research Project**

#### **What is the project about?**

The first part of the study will compare interactions and practices in six non-compulsory early years settings (three in Spain (Murcia) and three in England (Kent)). This will enable the examination of the impact of any cultural differences on early years policy and practice in the two countries. The second part of the study will seek to investigate whether or not these differences, identified in the settings, may be reflected in broader social attitudes to children and childhood.

#### **Who will be involved in the project?**

The researcher will lead the project which will begin by focusing upon six non-compulsory early years settings (three in Spain (Murcia) and three in England (Kent)). All the early years setting staff will be invited to be involved in the project and their input valued throughout the research process. In the second part of the project, key informants such as parents and carers, and those who negotiate the place of young children in public places, such as restaurateurs will be interviewed with the aim of building a picture of how children are viewed in the two countries.

#### **How will this information be collected?**

The information will be collected using the following methods:

- semi-structured and informal interviews with staff, parents and other key informants such as restaurateurs;
- audio recordings;
- compact digital video recordings of interactions and practices in the early years settings;
- field notes;
- research diary;
- documentation.

Recording will be restricted to 1 hour only during each preschool session. In turn, the children's play will not be restricted as a result of being recorded. This latter condition reinforces to all involved in the research process the need to allow children to go about their lives without consideration for the study. Children and staff will be filmed using a hand-held compact digital video recorder with an easily viewable side-opening screen to allow maximum movement for the researcher to move from area to area and room to room. Most filming will be done at a distance to avoid the researcher's presence being intrusive to and so not to interfere with the natural progression of play. Children, staff and parents will have the right to refuse to be filmed at any time.

#### **How will the participants' identities be protected?**

All adult and child participants will be given pseudonyms, and encouraged to regularly view and comment on the video data.

When using visual images for research purposes such as presentations, depending on the detail required, the researcher will obscure images by 'fuzzing' participants' faces or

reducing the pixel count to protect identities. Alternatively, sketches of video stills will be drawn to indicate body positioning and directionality of movement.

Any clearly identifiable images will be circulated to participants and permission to use sought, stating the purpose of use.

### **Compliance with Data Protection Act**

In the UK, formal guidance on issues of confidentiality is given in the Data Protection Act (1998) which states that data about individuals must only be used for agreed, specified purposes, and that data should be relevant, adequate and not excessive to the purpose for which it was gathered. The researcher is likely to build up much confidential information and data during ethnographic research. Therefore, to comply with the legal requirements of the DPA, in relation to the storage and use of personal data, the following measures will be taken:

- Any individuals (these are likely to be parents/carers, children, early years practitioners) will be informed how, and why their personal data is being stored, to what uses it is being put to and to whom it may be made available. No sensitive personal data will be held.
- Only the amount of information to fulfil the research will be kept and collected.
- Participants will be made aware of their rights to have access to any personal data that is stored in relation to them and access will be provided if requested.
- Any collected data will be kept separate from personal identity information after collection and codes will be used to identify individual cases.
- Data will be anonymised and stored securely. Paper data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home office; computerised data will be password protected and screens will not be left unattended when personal data is being processed. When disposing of the data, which will be kept for five years (from the end of the research project), this will be done securely by shredding manual records and wiping clean the hard drives of computers.
- Care will be taken to ensure that any publications such as the final PhD thesis and any articles resulting from the research study (including Internet publications) do not lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity.

### **What if I decide not to take part in the project at any point in the research process?**

Children, staff and parents have the right to refuse to be filmed or recorded at any time. Likewise, all participants have the right to withdraw from the project or change their mind about being involved at any stage of the research process. This can be for a few minutes, for a whole session or forever.

**Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation, please raise this with the Research Investigator (Chris Gomez) or the Research Investigator's Director of Studies (Professor Kevin Brehony):**

**Name:** Chris Gomez (Research Investigator)

**Contact Address:** Early Childhood Research Centre, Roehampton University

**Direct Phone No.:** 01242 251375 OR 07745 020592

**Email:** cgo2608@aol.com OR gomezc@roehampton.ac.uk

**Name:** Professor Kevin Brehony (Director of Studies)

**Contact Address:** Early Childhood Research Centre, Roehampton University,

**Direct Phone No.:** 0208 392 3881

**E-mail:** K.Brehony@roehampton.ac.uk

## **Appendix L: Information about the Research Project (Spanish)**



### **Información sobre el Proyecto de Investigación**

#### **¿De que trata el proyecto?**

La primera parte del estudio se compara las interacciones y prácticas en seis escuelas infantiles (tres en España (Murcia) y tres en Inglaterra (Kent)). De este modo, se facilitara el examen de los efectos de cualquier diferencia cultural en la política y la práctica en los dos países. La segunda parte del estudio se tratará de investigar si o no estas diferencias, que se identifican en las escuelas infantiles, puede estar reflejado en las actitudes sociales a los niños y la infancia.

#### **¿Quien participará en el proyecto?**

La investigadora llevará el proyecto que se iniciará con seis escuelas infantiles (tres en España (Murcia) y tres en Inglaterra (Kent)). Todas las educadoras/maestras serán invitadas a participar en el proyecto y su aportación vale mucho en todo el proceso de investigación. En la segunda parte del proyecto, las principales fuentes de información como los padres y los tutores, y los que negocian la posición de los niños pequeños en lugares públicos, como la gente que trabaja en restaurantes, se entrevistaran con el propósito de construir una imagen de la manera en que los niños están considerados en los dos países.

#### **¿Cómo esta información debe recogerse?**

La información se recogerá mediante los métodos siguientes:

- Unas entrevistas semi-estructuradas y entrevistas informales con el personal, los padres y otros informantes clave, tales como los restauradores;
- Unas grabaciones de audio;
- Grabaciones digitales de las interacciones y las prácticas en las escuelas infantiles;
- Unas notas de campo;
- Una agenda de investigación;
- La documentación.

La grabación se limitará a sola una hora durante cada período de sesiones de preescolar. A su vez, los juegos infantiles no se limitarán, como resultado de que se está grabando. Esta última condición refuerza a todos los que participan en el proceso de investigación la necesidad de permitir a los niños a dedicarse a sus vidas sin tener en cuenta para el estudio. Los niños y las educadoras/maestras se filmó utilizando una grabadora de vídeo digital con una pantalla fácilmente visible para permitir el máximo movimiento para la investigadora de pasar de una zona a otra y de una habitación a otra. La mayor parte de la filmación se llevará a una distancia para evitar que la presencia de la investigadora ser intruso a fin de no interferir con la progresión natural del juego. Los niños, las educadoras/maestras y los padres tendrán el derecho de negarse a ser filmados en cualquier momento.

#### **¿Cómo se protegerá las identidades de los participantes?**

Todos los adultos y los niños participantes se darán seudónimos, y alentó a ver regularmente y dar sus observaciones sobre los datos de vídeo.

Cuando se utilizan imágenes visuales con presentaciones de la investigación, dependiente de la información que se requiere, la investigadora va a oscurecer las imágenes por



"fuzzing" las caras de las participantes o reduce la cantidad de los píxeles para proteger las identidades. Alternativamente, dibujos de imágenes de vídeo, se usará a indicar la posición y dirección del cuerpo.

Cualquier imágenes claramente identificables se distribuirá a los participantes y permiso solicitado para utilizarlos, indicando su utilización.

### **Cumplimiento de la Ley de Protección de Datos**

En el Reino Unido, orientación formal sobre cuestiones de confidencialidad se da en la Ley de Protección de Datos (1998), que establece que los datos acerca de los individuos debe ser utilizado únicamente para los convenidos, fines concretos, y que los datos deben ser pertinentes, adecuados y no excesivos para la finalidad. Para los objetivos de la investigación, la investigadora puede crear mucha información y datos confidenciales durante la investigación etnográfica. Por lo tanto, para cumplir con los requisitos legales de la Ley de Protección de Datos, en relación con el mantenimiento y la utilización de los datos personales, las siguientes medidas se tomarán:

- Todo los individuos (es probable que sean los padres/tutores, los niños, las educadoras/las maestras) se informarán cómo, y por qué sus datos personales se mantienen, para que se utiliza y a quien serán puestos en disponibilidad. No se celebrará ningunos datos personales sensibles.
- Sólo se reunirá y guardará cantidad la información necesaria para cumplir con la investigación.
- Se informará los participantes de sus derechos a tener acceso a cualquier dato personal que se guarda en relación con ellos se facilitará el acceso si alguien se solicita.
- Todos los datos recogidos se mantendrá separado de la identidad personal después de la recogida de información y se utilizará los códigos para identificar los casos individuales.
- Los datos será mantenido de forma segura y anónima. Documento de los datos se guardan bajo llave en la oficina de la investigadora; se protegerá por contraseña los datos representados digitalmente y no se dejara solas las pantallas cuando personal esta procesando los datos de carácter. Al disponer de los datos, que se conservarán durante cinco años (a partir del final del proyecto de investigación), esto se hará con seguridad por la trituración de los documentos manuales y a través de borrar los discos duros de los ordenadores.
- Se asegurare que cualquier publicaciones como la última tesis de doctorado y de los artículos resultantes de cualquier estudio de investigación (incluyendo las publicaciones en Internet) no conducen a una violación de la confidencialidad y el anonimato.

### **¿Qué pasa si decido no participar en el proyecto en cualquier punto en el proceso de investigación?**

Los niños, las educadoras/las maestras y los padres tienen el derecho a negarse a ser filmado o grabado en cualquier momento. Asimismo, todos los participantes tienen el derecho de retirarse del proyecto o cambiar de opinión acerca de participar en cualquier etapa del proceso de investigación. Esto puede ser por unos minutos, para una sesión o para siempre.

**Por favor: si usted tiene una preocupación por algún aspecto de su participación, por favor habla con la investigadora (Christina Gómez) o el 'Director of Studies' de la investigadora (Professor (catedrático) Kevin Brehony):**

**Nombre:** Christina Gómez (Investigadora)

**Dirección:** Early Childhood Research Centre, Roehampton University

**Numero de teléfono directo:** 00 44 1242 251375

**Email:** cgo2608@aol.com o gomezc@roehampton.ac.uk

**Name:** Professor (catedrático) Kevin Brehony (Director of Studies)

**Dirección:** Early Childhood Research Centre, Roehampton University,

**Numero de teléfono directo:** 00 44 208 392 3881

**E-mail:** K.Brehony@roehampton.ac.uk

**Appendix M: Letters confirming visits to settings**  
(a) Letter confirming visit to setting for practitioners (English)



Dear [Practitioner name]

**Research project:** Comparing the interactions and practices within a sample of non-compulsory early years settings, and the attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain).

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the above study. Your interest and input into the project is much appreciated and valued, and I look forward to working alongside you over the next four weeks.

Please find attached an information sheet giving further details about the project. Throughout the time I spend at the setting I am looking forward to finding out about your experience as an early years practitioner. Any interviews and consultations, and the representation of your views on the research text will enable a platform for your voices and help to give a sense of ownership over the data. There will also be opportunities for you to view any recorded data and also to communicate your insights regarding the interpretation of events.

I would also be grateful if you would complete and return the enclosed Research Participant Consent Form related to the project and return it back to me before ... providing that you have no objections to participating in this study.

Regards

Chris Gomez

**Appendix M:**  
**(b) Letter confirming visit to setting for parents/carers (English)**



Dear Parents/Carers

**Research project:** Comparing the interactions and practices within a sample of non-compulsory early years settings, and the attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain).

The early years setting, which your child attends, has kindly agreed to participate in the above study. In turn, this should enable us to become better informed about any differences with regard to the practices and interactions in a sample of non-compulsory settings for young children both in England and Spain.

As mentioned above, the research will predominantly focus on the interactions and practices at the early years setting. As some children will be filmed whilst playing at the setting, it is likely that your child may appear in the video data.

I have attached an information sheet to this letter giving you more detailed information on the project. However, I would also be happy to meet with you personally to discuss any questions or queries that you may have in relation to the study.

Also, please find attached a Research Participant Consent Form related to the above Research Project which I would be grateful if you could complete and return back to the setting before ... providing that you have no objections to the setting (or your child) participating in this study.

I will be spending time at ... starting on ... until ... and I look forward to meeting with you then.

Regards

Chris Gomez

**Appendix M:**  
**(c) Letter confirming visit to setting for practitioners (Spanish)**



Estimada [Nombre]

**Proyecto de investigación:** La comparación de las interacciones y las prácticas dentro de una muestra de las escuelas infantiles, y actitudes hacia la crianza de los niños y niños jóvenes en Kent (Inglaterra) y Murcia (España).

Gracias por acceder a participar en el estudio anterior. Su interés y participación en el proyecto es muy apreciada y valorada, y espero trabajar junto a ti en las próximas semanas.

Se adjunta una hoja que da más detalles sobre el proyecto. Durante todo el tiempo que paso en las escuelas quedo a la espera de averiguar acerca de su experiencia como una educadora/maestra. Cualquier entrevista y consultas, y la representación de sus puntos de vista sobre el texto de investigación permitirán una plataforma para sus voces y ayudan a dar un sentido de propiedad sobre los datos. También habrá una oportunidad para que usted pueda ver cualquier información registrada y también para comunicar sus ideas acerca de la interpretación de los acontecimientos.

Voy a pasar tiempo en la escuela infantil en las fechas siguientes:...

Yo también agradecería si pudiera completar y devolver la 'Formulario de Consentimiento' relacionados con el proyecto y volver de nuevo a mí antes del ... si no tiene objeciones a participar en este estudio.

Un saludo

Cristina Gómez

**Appendix M:**

**(d) Letter confirming visit to setting for parents/carers (Spanish)**



Queridos Padres/Tutores

**Proyecto de investigación:** La comparación de las interacciones y las prácticas dentro de una muestra de las escuelas infantiles, y actitudes hacia la crianza de los niños y también los niños jóvenes en Kent (Inglaterra) y Murcia (España).

La escuela infantil, que atiende su hijo/hija, ha accedido amablemente a participar en el estudio. A su vez, esto nos permitirá estar mejor informados acerca de las diferencias con respecto a las prácticas e interacciones en una muestra de escuelas infantiles para los niños pequeños en Inglaterra y España.

Como se mencionó anteriormente, la investigación se centrará predominantemente en las interacciones y las prácticas en las escuelas infantiles. Como algunos niños estarán filmados mientras juegan en la escuela, es probable que su hijo/hija pueda aparecer en el vídeo de datos.

Le adjunto una hoja de información a esta carta dándole información más detallada sobre el proyecto. Sin embargo, yo también estaría feliz de reunirse personalmente con usted para discutir cualquier pregunta que usted pueda tener en relación con el estudio. Si está interesado en contribuir al estudio acerca de sus experiencias (positivas o negativas) de ser uno de los padres/tutores a un niño pequeño en este país, por favor, habla conmigo.

Asimismo, se adjunta una investigación 'Formulario de Consentimiento de Participantes' en relación con el anterior proyecto de investigación. Yo agradecería si pudiera completar y devolver a la escuela infantil este formulario antes del uno de mayo disponiendo que no tiene objeciones a la escuela infantil (o su hijo/hija) participando en este estudio.

Voy a pasar tiempo en la escuela infantil en las fechas siguientes:...  
Espero con interés una reunión con usted.

Saludos

Cristina Gómez

**Appendix N:**  
**(a) Information sheet 'About me' (English)**

**Chris Gomez - 'About me':**

I moved from Putney, London to Cheltenham just over fifteen years ago where I now live with my husband (when I am not travelling down to London and over to Spain). I have two daughters (one who works at Shakespeare's Globe, London) and the other who has just completed her degree in Sussex and is also now working in London (for an IT company).

Since completing a NNEB (Nursery Nursing) course directly after leaving school, I have worked in a wide variety of early years settings including a hospital day nursery, hotels in Britain and Europe, a playbus, playgroups, nursery and primary schools and I also ran my own nursery in London.

Being a firm advocate of lifelong learning, I trained as a Montessori teacher in 1983, obtained my BA Degree with the Open University in 1989 and my MA Degree with the University of Surrey (Roehampton) in 1993. Before returning to full-time study in 1995 to qualify as an early years teacher, I worked as a qualified lecturer on a range of early years courses at the local further education college.

After gaining a P.G.C.E. (Early Years) in 1996, I taught in a variety of early years settings and schools. Following on from this, I trained and worked as an OFSTED Nursery Inspector. I also trained and worked as an OFSTED Childcare Inspector in the South West region (Bristol) doing transitional inspections in line with the National Standards.

In 2003 I joined the Open University as a tutor on their early years courses and have since tutored on three different courses. In parallel with this I have been looking at the integration of ICT in settings for under-fives.

Having been awarded a bursary from the Froebel Committee (at Roehampton University) I am also now lucky enough to be pursuing a PhD full-time. In turn, I will be investigating if and how the differences between the lifestyles and cultures of Spain and England transfer into formal early years settings.

Chris Gomez

**Appendix N:**  
**(b) Information sheet 'About me' (Spanish)**

**Christina Gómez: 'About me' (Sobre mí):**

Vivo en Cheltenham, en el sudoeste de Inglaterra con mi marido quien es medio murciano (pero también viaja a Londres y España frecuentemente). Tengo dos hijas (una hija trabaja en el teatro Globe de William Shakespeare en Londres) y la otra que acaba de terminar su licenciatura en la universidad de Sussex (y Sevilla) también está trabajando ahora en Londres (para una empresa de Informática).

Cuando terminé el colegio completé un curso para trabajar con los niños pequeños. He trabajado en una variedad de lugares, incluso de una guardería de un hospital, hoteles en Gran Bretaña y Europa, un autobús de juego, varias guarderías y escuelas primarias y también era una dueña de una escuela infantil en Londres.

Soy una defensora de la educación de toda la vida. Califiqué como una maestra de Montessori en 1983, obtengo mi BA Licenciatura en la Universidad a distancia (Open) en 1989, y mi Licenciatura en Letras con la Universidad de Surrey (Roehampton) en 1993. Antes de regresar a los estudios en 1995 para calificar como una maestra/una profesora trabajé como una profesora en una institución académica.

Después de un curso de posgraduado en 1996, enseñé clases en una variedad de parvularios y escuelas. Siguiendo esto, entrené y trabajé como una inspectora de parvularios y escuelas infantiles haciendo inspecciones de acuerdo con los estándares nacionales de Inglaterra (Oficina de Estándares en Educación).

En 2003 empecé a trabajar a la Universidad a Distancia (Open University) como profesora en sus cursos para educadoras/maestras. En paralelo con este he observado la integración de Informática Tecnológica en las escuelas y parvularios con menores de cinco años.

Ahora que me han concedido una beca de la Comisión Froebel (basado en la Universidad de Roehampton, Londres) tengo la suerte de estar realizando un doctorado. A su vez, voy a investigar si y cómo las diferencias entre los estilos de vida y las culturas de España e Inglaterra se trasladan en las escuelas infantiles.

Cristina Gómez

**Appendix O: Introductory Letter about research for potential early years settings (English)**



**Home Address:**

The Middle House  
54b School Rd  
Charlton Kings  
Cheltenham  
Glos.  
GL53 8BE

Tel.: 07933 020592

E-mail: cgo2608@aol.com OR gomezc@roehampton.ac.uk

Dear Early years setting

**A comparative case study of pre-compulsory early years settings, and attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain).**

I am contacting you to invite you to become involved in the first part of my forthcoming research project which will focus on the above topic. As can be seen from the letter heading, I am based at the Early Childhood Research Centre (ECRC) Roehampton University. The project is part of my doctoral studies and my supervisors are Professor Kevin Brehony and Professor Becky Francis.

The first part of the study will begin by looking at the interactions (of adults and children) and practices within a sample of early years settings in both Murcia (Spain) and Kent (England). In doing so, it is hoped that any similarities and differences in policy and practice between the two countries will be identified.

Following on from this, in the second part of the study, people who work in restaurants, hotels and shopping centres will be interviewed to find out about their attitudes to young children. Children and adults will also be observed in these public places. Additionally, parents and carers in the two countries will be interviewed to find out about their experiences of child-rearing.

As part of the project I would need to visit your setting for over a period of four weeks in September, October or November (2007) (depending on what would be convenient for you). During these visits, I would undertake interviews with practitioners and parents, and also observe the daily interactions between children and adults during the sessions. I can assure you that any information collected or provided during the research will be treated in confidence and the identity of the setting and individuals will be protected at all times.

If you would be at all interested in participating in the above project please contact me in whatever way would be convenient for you using the details above. If you would like to contact me by post I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope. Following on from this, I can then send you further details about the research and also some information about myself.

Look forward to hearing from you

Chris(tine) Gomez



## Appendix P: Introductory Letter about research for potential early years settings (Spanish)



### Dirección Postal (España):

Calle Fragata 39  
1º, E  
Sotavento III  
30710 Los Alcázares  
Murcia

**Tel.:** 660454158

**E-mail (Correo Electrónico):** cgo2608@aol.com

**OR** gomezc@roehampton.ac.uk

### Dirección Particular (Inglaterra):

54b School Rd  
Charlton Kings  
Cheltenham  
Glos.  
GL53 8BE

**Tel.:** 0744 7933 020593

Estimado Parvulario

### **Un estudio comparativo de los parvularios, y actitudes hacia niños y la crianza de ellos en Kent (Inglaterra) y Murcia (España).**

Me dirigo a usted para invitarle a participar en la primera parte de mi proyecto de investigación próximo que se centra en el tema indicada arriba. Como se nota del título de la letra, trabajo en la Universidad de Roehampton en el centro de investigación de la niñez (Early Childhood Research Centre). El proyecto es parte de mis estudios doctorales y mis supervisores son Profesor (Catedrático) Kevin Brehony y Profesor (Catedrática) Becky Francis.

La primera parte del estudio comenzará enfocando las interacciones (de adultos y de niños) y las prácticas dentro de unos parvularios en Murcia (España) y Kent (Inglaterra). Al hacer eso, se espera que se identifiquen algunas semejantes y diferencias en la política y la práctica entre los dos países. Después de esto, en la segunda parte del estudio, realizaré entrevistas con la gente que trabaja en restaurantes, hoteles y centros de compras para determinar sus actitudes a los niños jóvenes. También, observaré a los niños y a los adultos en estos lugares públicos. Además, hablaré con los padres y los 'carers' en los dos países para descubrir sus experiencias de criar los niños.

Para realizar la primera parte del proyecto necesitaría visitar su parvulario por cuatro semanas en febrero, marzo o abril (2008) (dependiendo de cuál sería conveniente para usted). Durante estas visitas, hablaría con los parvulistas y los padres, y también observaría las interacciones diarias entre los niños y los adultos durante las sesiones. Puedo asegurarle que trataré cualquier información recogida o proporcionada durante la investigación en confianza y protegeré la identidad del parvulario y a los individuos. No habrá trabajo extra para usted. Todo lo que necesita es su entusiasmo.

Si se interesa participar en el proyecto por favor contáctame en cualquier manera que sea conveniente para usted (usando los detalles arriba). El metodo preferido es correo electrónico. Al recibir noticias, puedo enviarle otros detalles sobre la investigación y más información sobre me.

Sin otro particular, quedo a la espera de su respuesta

Atentamente,  
Chris(tina) Gomez

**Appendix Q: Confirmation Letter for Key Informants (Restaurateurs, Hoteliers, Representatives of Shopping Centres, and Parents/Carers who have experience of both Spain and England (English))**

Dear [Name of key informant]

**Research project:** Comparing the interactions and practices within a sample of non-compulsory early years settings, and the attitudes to child-rearing and young children in Kent (England) and Murcia (Spain).

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the above study. Your interest and input into the second part of the above project is much appreciated and valued. In turn, I look forward to meeting with you at the interview scheduled for [date]. Please find attached an information sheet giving further details about the project.

I would also be grateful if you would complete and return the enclosed Research Participant Consent Form related to the project and return it back to me before [date] providing that you have no objections to participating in this study.

Signed - the researcher

**Appendix R: Confirmation Letter for Key Informants (Restaurateurs, Hoteliers, Representatives of Shopping Centres and Parents/Carers who have experience of both Spain and England (Spanish))**

Estimada [Nombre]

**Proyecto de investigación:** La comparación de las interacciones y las prácticas dentro de una muestra de las escuelas infantiles, y actitudes hacia la crianza de los niños y niños jóvenes en Kent (Inglaterra) y Murcia (España).

Gracias por acceder a participar en el estudio anterior. Su interés y participación en el proyecto es muy apreciada y valorada. Espero con interés una reunión con usted en la fecha siguiente [date]. Se adjunta una hoja que da más detalles sobre el proyecto.

Yo también agradecería si pudiera completar y devolver la 'Formulario de Consentimiento' relacionados con el proyecto si no tiene objeciones a participar en este estudio.

Un saludo

Cristina Gómez

**Appendix S: Table showing dates of visits to 18 hotels, restaurants and shopping centres in Murcia and Kent**

<b>Hotels visited</b>	<b>Restaurants visited</b>	<b>Shopping Centres visited</b>
Kent Hotel 1 (town) Date of Interview: 07.07.08 Date of observations: 07.07.08	Murcia Restaurant 1 (Coastal) Date of Interview: 14.08.08 Date of observations: 14.08.08; 17.08.08	Shopping Centre 1 (Kent) Date of Interview: 10.10.08 Date of observations: 10.10.08
Kent Hotel 2 (out-of-town) Date of Interview: 08.07.08 Date of observations: 08.07.08	Murcia Restaurant 2 (Out-of-town) Date of Interview: 22.08.08 Date of observations: 22.08.08; 24.08.08	Shopping Centre 2 (Kent) Date of Interview: 17.10.08 Date of observations: 17.10.08
Kent Hotel 3 (coastal) Date of Interview: 09.07.08 Date of observations: 09.07.08	Murcia Restaurant 3 (City) Date of Interview: 18.07.08 Date of observations: 18.07.08; 20.07.08	Shopping Centre 3 (Kent) Date of Interview: 24.10.08 Date of observations: 24.10.08
Murcia Hotel 4 (coastal) Date of Interview: 08.08.08 Date of observations: 08.08.08	Kent Restaurant 4 (Coastal) Date of Interview: 06.09.08 Date of observations: 06.09.08; 07.09.08	Shopping Centre 4 (Murcia) Date of Interview: 26.08.08 Date of observations: 26.08.08
Murcia Hotel 5 (out-of-town) Date of Interview: 07.08.08 Date of observations: 07.08.08	Kent Restaurant 5 (Town) Date of Interview: 19.09.08 Date of observations: 19.09.08; 21.09.08	Shopping Centre 5 (Murcia) Date of Interview: 25.08.08 Date of observations: 25.08.08
Murcia Hotel 6 (city) Date of Interview: 25.07.08 Date of observations: 25.07.08;	Kent Restaurant 6 (Out-of-town) Date of Interview: 13.09.08 Date of observations: 13.09.08; 14.09.08	Shopping Centre 6 (Murcia) Date of Interview: 28.08.08 Date of observations: 28.08.08

## Appendix T

### Valued educational practice in cultural context

Valued Educational Practice	<i>Individualism</i>	<i>Collectivism</i>
<b>Children's Learning Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place mostly in age segregated settings adapted to children's size and ability</li> <li>• Learning materials, furniture and facilities are designed and organised to encourage independent use by children</li> <li>• Play area and learning materials are organised to encourage free play, exploration and children's autonomous choice of activity</li> <li>• "Private spaces" are arranged to meet children's need to be alone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning occurs mostly through participation in activity of adults and more capable peers</li> <li>• Learning materials, furniture and facilities are designed and organised to draw children's attention to the learning task</li> <li>• Space, play and learning materials are organised to facilitate the structured learning environment planned by the teacher</li> <li>• Space is planned for group activity only</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning occurs through activities planned for instruction</li> <li>• Adult instruction is adapted to children's ability and interest</li> <li>• Schedules of activities are planned but flexible</li> <li>• Activities provide frequent individual interactions of child with teacher</li> <li>• Free play provides ample opportunity for learning through exploration, independent problem solving, questioning and critical thinking</li> <li>• Activities encourage children to draw on knowledge from books, radio, TV, and computers</li> <li>• Activities are planned to enhance personal and success and achievement, competition and self-confidence</li> <li>• Social activities are planned to strengthen child's social competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning occurs through apprenticeship and imitation</li> <li>• Adults and peers provide guidance and encouragement</li> <li>• Schedules of activities are planned and not flexible</li> <li>• Activities provide frequent interactions with other children in a group</li> <li>• Structured learning activities provide opportunity for rote learning, observation and imitation of teacher. Free play is seen as "fun" not learning.</li> <li>• Activities encourage children to draw on knowledge from oral tradition and authority figures</li> <li>• Activities are planned to enhance group cohesion, mutual dependence and involvement</li> <li>• Social activities are planned to strengthen children's sense of belonging to the group</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher-Child Interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers frequently adapt their instruction to children's ability</li> <li>• Teachers engage in frequent verbal interaction, enrich language skills. They ask "open" questions, and encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings</li> <li>• Teacher motivates children's curiosity and willingness to explore their environment</li> <li>• Teacher responds sensitively to children's individual bids for her attention attempting to meet the individual needs of every child</li> <li>• Behaviour norms are stated clearly with an explanation of their rationale. Adherence to norm is flexible</li> <li>• Teacher's relationship with children is based on mutual respect, equality, and symmetry</li> <li>• An authoritarian teacher is seen as disrespectful of children's rights and autonomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children frequently adapt themselves to adult activity</li> <li>• Teacher uses verbal interaction to instruct children. She asks questions that require "correct" answers. She does not encourage expression of independent thought and feelings</li> <li>• Teacher motivates children to work hard and be attentive to her teaching</li> <li>• Teacher ignores individual bids for attention and encourages children to respond sensitively to each other's needs</li> <li>• Behavioural norms are stated strictly. Violation of a norm is treated as "shameful" by the group. No flexibility is allowed.</li> <li>• Teacher's relationship with children is hierarchical and is based on children's respect to teacher.</li> <li>• An authoritarian teacher is seen as responsible, nurturing and concerned about children</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Rosenthal (2003) pp.109-110.

## Appendix U: Tables describing the daily routines at the six pre-compulsory early years settings in Kent and Murcia

### Daily routine at Setting 1 (Kent Coastal)

Time	Activity
9.15 am	Time to play (including arrival of children)
9.50 am	Time to tidy-up
9.55 am	Time for 'Sticky Kids' (music and movement)
10.05 am	Time for a story
10.15 am	Drinks time (ongoing for approx. 1 hour)
10.15 am	Time to play
11.20 am	Time to tidy up
11.35 am	Time for songs
11.45 am	Time to go home (departure of children)

### Daily routine at Setting 2 (Kent Outskirts)

Time	Activity
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Arrivals & Free Play
9.10 am – 10.15 am	Free Play
10.15 am -10.30 am	Show & Tell Time & Register
10.30 am –10.45 am	Snack time
10.45 am –11.45 am	Adult-directed activities (Craft, music and dancing)
11.45 am	Tidy-up time; Storytime; Rhymes & Action Songs
12.00 pm	Lunch
12.30 pm	Quiet Time
1.00 pm*	Home Time
1.30 pm	Free Play & some adult-directed activities
3.00 pm	Tidy-up time & afternoon snacks
3.15 pm	Storytime. Rhymes & Action Songs
4.00 pm	Hometime

\*At the time the setting was being visited for data collection it was only open 8.30 am until 1.00 pm. This was due to the lower number of children attending at this time of year.

### Daily routine at Setting 3 (Kent Urban)

Time	Activity
8.30 am – 9.15 am	Early Arrivals
9.15 am	Morning session begins: Free Play; Free-flow access to garden; Planned activities in small groups
9.45 am – 10.45 am	Milk-bar (in parallel with 'Free-play')
11.10 am	Tidy-up time
11.15 am	Storytime/Acting-out stories (Children organised into three groups for stories)
11.30 am	Music and Movement; Celebrating any birthdays (All children)
11.45 am	End of morning session
12.00 pm	Optional late morning finish
12.00 pm – 1.00 pm	Lunch club (optional)
1.00 pm	Afternoon session begins: Free Play; Free-flow access to garden; Planned activities in small groups
2.00 pm – 2.45 pm	Milk-bar (in parallel with 'Free-play')
2.55 pm	Tidy-up time
3.00 pm	Storytime/Acting-out stories (Children organised into three groups for stories)
3.15 pm	Music and Movement; Celebrating any birthdays (All children)
3.30 pm	Sessions ends
4.00 pm	Optional late afternoon finish (needs to be pre-booked)

### Daily routine at Setting 4 (Murcia – Coastal)

Time	Activity
8.00 am – 10.00 am	Early Arrivals
<b>Aulas 2 and 3 (1 and 2 year olds)</b>	
10.00 am – 10.15 am	Tidy-up time;

	Asamblea (Register, Singing, Introduction of daily activity)
10.30 am	Snacktime (Almuerzo)
10.45 am – 11.45 am	Patio
11.45 am	Children return to individual <i>aulas</i> : Drink of water; Free play; Changing/Toileting
12.20 pm	Tidy-up time; Children staying for lunch are collected by lunchtime auxiliary and taken to eat in dining area kitchen
12.30 pm	Story/singing with P for remaining children; some children are collected by parents/carers
12.45 pm – 2.00 pm	Children return from lunch; some children who are staying later are taken for rest, others play in <i>Aulas</i> 2 and 3.
<b>Aulas 4, 5 and 6 (2 and 3 year olds)</b>	
10.00 am -10.30 am	'School' begins: Tidy-up time; Asamblea (Register, Introduction of activity or English lesson (depending on day))
10.30 am – 10.45 am	Snacktime
10.45 am – 11.00 am	Toileting/Free Play
11.00 am – 12.00 pm	Patio (Outdoor on fine days/Indoor in inclement weather)
12.00 pm – 1.00 pm	Children return to individual <i>aulas</i> . Drink of water; Toileting/Grooming; Resource for children to play with chosen by practitioner i.e. books, bricks, plastic crockery, music CD. Some children are collected between 12.30 pm and 1.00 pm.
1.00 pm	Lunchtime – Remaining children not staying for lunch go into <i>Aula</i> 2 to await collection
1.00 pm – 1.30 pm	Lunch in dining area/kitchen. Adjoining psychomotor room is used for children waiting for lunch and also for those children who have finished lunch
1.30 pm	Children return to <i>Aula</i> 4, 5 and 6. Children staying for pm Session are taken for rest. Toileting/Grooming/Free play.
2.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Children play on patio; children not staying for pm session are collected by parents/carers
3.00 pm	Majority of practitioners leave (apart from P who is staying for afternoon session with P (B))
3.00 pm – 6.00 pm	For both age groups – repeat of session as from 10.00 am – 1.00 pm. However, most children attend 9.00 – 1.00 and very few children, if any, stay beyond 6.00 pm
6.00 pm – 8.00 pm	Late departure of children.

### Daily routine at Setting 5 (Murcia Urban)

Time	Activity
<b>Aula Abierta (Special needs classroom)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.30 am	Arrival of and welcome of individual children Free play
9.30 am – 9.45 am	Group greeting on the floormat; Good morning song
9.45 am – 11.00 am	Work in the classroom using the program and work with The special needs specialists
11.00 am – 11.30 am	Patio (Outdoor play)
11.30 am – 12.00 pm	Toileting, Preparation for the lunch
12.00 pm – 1.15 pm	Lunch
1.15 pm – 1.30 pm	Toileting
1.30 pm – 3.00 pm	Siesta
3.00 pm – 4.00 pm	Toileting, Play and Departure
<b>Aula de bebés (Babyroom)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Welcome babies/children
9.00 – 12.00 pm	Activities appropriate to the level in accordance with the programme, changing of nappies, sleeping etc.
12.00 pm – 1.00 pm	Lunch
1.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Changing of nappies, Siesta supervised by the support worker.
3.00 pm – 4.00 pm	Changing of nappies, Activities appropriate to the level of the children and farewell to the babies/children.
<b>Aulas de 1 a 2 años (Classrooms for the 1 to 2 year olds)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Welcome the children
9.00 am – 10.30 am	Activities appropriate to the level in accordance with the program
10.30 am – 10.45 am	Toileting
10.45 am – 11.45 am	Patio (Outdoor Play)

11.45 am – 12.15 pm	Preparation for the lunch, toileting and changing nappies, farewell to the children who do not stay for lunch
12.15 pm – 1.15 pm	Lunch
1.15 pm – 3.15 pm	Changing nappies, toileting and siesta
3.15 pm – 4.00 pm	Changing nappies, toileting, Activities appropriate to the level of the children and farewell to the children
<b>Aulas de 2 a 3 años (Classrooms for the 2 to 3 year olds)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Arrival and free play
9.15 am – 10.15 am	Asamblea (Group assembly) and activities from the program
10.15 am – 10.30 am	Toileting
10.30 am – 11.30 am	Patio (Outdoor Play)
11.30 am – 12.00 pm	Toileting and preparation for lunch
12.00 pm – 12.45 pm	Lunch
12.45 pm – 1.00 pm	Toileting
1.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Siesta
3.00 pm – 3.15 pm	Toileting
3.15 pm – 4.00 pm	Activities appropriate to the level of the children and farewell To the children

Within the setting's basic timetable that is outlined in **Daily routine at Setting 6** the individual practitioners organised their own routines for their *aulas*.

#### **Daily routine at Setting 6 (Murcia – Outskirts)**

Time	Activity
8.30 am – 12.00 pm	Arrival and activities
12.00 pm – 1.00 pm	Lunch
1.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Siesta (Adult lunch – 1.30 pm)
3.00 pm	Children wake up
3.00 pm – 4.00 pm	Children collected

#### **Individual aulas' daily routines at Setting 6 (Murcia – Outskirts)**

Time	Activity
<b>P (Ad)'s School Day (Aula 1 – 2 years olds)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Children arrive at the classroom. Exchange information with the mothers
9.00 am – 10.00 am	Assembly. Everyone sits down and we take 'Topi' (the class squirrel mascot) and we sit it on its photo. We do the Good morning song saying all our names, and clapping. We look at the story of the 'Squirrel' or the 'Cotton cloud' and we sing the song of "Topi, la ardilla feliz" (the happy squirrel), 'Los Pollitos' (The chickens) or 'Caracol col col' (Snail). Afterwards we get up and we begin to play in the corners and we work in small groups at the table: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using crayons</li> <li>• Doing fingerpainting</li> <li>• Sticking stickers</li> <li>• Tearing paper</li> <li>• Doing puzzles</li> <li>• Playing with plasticine</li> </ul> And finally we tidy everything away
10.00 am – 10.15 am	We spend a little time with the support person (T) to change our nappies and if we are older we sit on the potties
10.15 am – 10.45 am	Outdoor activities on the patio, we go on the swings, we go on the slide, we ride on the tricycles, we play with the balls
10.45 am – 11.30 am	We return to the classroom. We rest for a short time listening to quiet music and afterwards we drink water and we play in our favourite corner
11.30 am – 11.45 am	T (support worker) helps us to wash our hands and we put on our bibs ready to go to the dining room
11.45 am – 12.30 pm	Lunch – In the dining room support person (P) helps us
12.30 pm – 1.00 pm	Bathroom – We wash our hands and faces and we have our nappies changed.
1.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Siesta. We put on quiet music.
3.00 pm – 4.00 pm	We get up. We change the nappy, we put on 'cologne', we comb our hair and we wait for mummy to arrive whilst playing a little or by looking at picture books.



<b>P (As)'s School Day (Aula 1 – 2 year olds)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.00 am	The children come into the classroom and they play freely
9.00 am – 9.30 am	The children sit in the circle and we do the Good morning song. We explain the work that we are going to do during the morning, we tell a story...
9.30 am – 10.20 am	We work at the tables (Published activity scheme, we use plasticine, we stick stickers...) and play freely in the classroom. We go to the toilet and change nappies, begin toilet training with those children who are ready. We return to the class and then we go out to the patio
10.20 am – 11.00 am	We go out to the patio for activities in the open air
11.00 am – 11.45 am	We come in from the patio and spend a few minutes relaxing listening to classical music. We change the nappies of the children who need changing. We sing songs and we give some time to stimulate the language. We wash the hands and we put on the bibs for lunch. We go to the dining room
11.45 am – 1.00 pm	Lunch, bathroom and we prepare for the siesta
1.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Siesta
3.00 pm – 3.30 pm	We wake up and we go to the toilet and change nappies
3.30 pm – 4.00 pm	We sit in the circle, we sing a song, we tell a story and we wait to be collected
<b>P (An)'s School Day (Aula 2 – 3 years olds)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.00 am	Children arrive in the classroom and help to take care of the animals and plants.
9.00 am – 9.45am	We move to the centre of the class to sit on our photo and begin the assembly by singing the 'Good Morning' song to all the group members, we listen to a story, sing songs, learn poems and rhymes and actions in our class group.
9.45 am – 10.45 am	We play in the corners and then tidy up.
10.45 am – 11.00 am	Toileting.
11.00 am – 11.30 am	Patio (Outdoor Play)
11.30 am – 12.00pm	We sit on our photos, we listen to music. We lie down on the floor and afterwards we wash our hands two by two, then we put on our bibs and we sing songs before we go to the dining room
12.00 pm – 12.45 pm	Lunch
12.45 pm – 1.00 pm	Toilet training, toileting and changing of nappies
1.00 pm – 3.00 pm	Siesta
3.00 pm – 3.30 pm	Toilet training, toileting and changing of nappies.
3.30 pm – 4.00 pm	Assembly and departure
<b>P (En)'s A Day in the School (Aula 2-3 year olds)</b>	
8.30 am – 9.00 am	The children arrive at the school and play freely in the Classroom.
9.00 am – 9.45 am	The children sit in a circle and we sing the 'Good morning' song. There is then a short assembly where we talk about interesting things. We explain the work that we are going to be doing during the morning and we tell a story
9.45 am – 10.45 am	We work at the tables (the activity scheme, we use plasticine, we stick stickers...) and play in the corners. We go to the toilet and do a 'pi-pi' and we change the children who are still in nappies. We tidy the class and go out to play on the patio
10.45 am – 11.30 am	We go out to the patio for activities in the open air
11.30 am – 12.00 pm	Lunch, use the bathroom and then prepare for the siesta
1.00 pm - 3.00 pm	Siesta
3.00 pm - 3.30 pm	We get up and we do a 'pi-pi'
3.30 pm – 4.00 pm	We sit in the circle and we sing a song, we tell a story And we wait to be collected.